Elsa Cutler
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MR. & MRS. BANCROFT

ON AND OFF THE STAGE

WRITTEN

BY THEMSELVES

A NEW EDITION, BEING THE EIGHTH

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WE DEDICATE

THIS BOOK

TO

OUR FELLOW-WORKERS AND COMRADES

ON THE STAGE

FOR SOME OF WHOM WE HAVE

A DEEP AFFECTION

FOR MANY OTHERS

A TRUE FRIENDSHIP

AND WITH ALL

AN ENDURING SYMPATHY

MARIE WILTON'S NARRATIVE

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD.

Parentage—A child-actress—Early lessons—A church-building fund entertainment—Fines—An adventure—'Emperor of Lilliput'—Embarrassing observations—Macready in *Macbeth*—Good advice and a wise choice—Miss Glyn—Prince Arthur in *King John*—Charles Kemble's prophecy—'The Veteran and the child'—An accident—Tiny Tim—Mrs. O'Brien—The Irishman who wouldn't retreat—Proposed adoption—Bristol Theatre—Mr. J. H. Chute—No-Wun-No-Zoo—A youthful Widow—Charles Dillon in *Belphegor*—Henri—My first London offer—Hesitation to accept it.

Place aux dames. I make no pretence to literary skill, and can only tell my story in a very simple way, in the belief that, as nearly all my life has been passed in the service of the public, I may speak to the reader as to a patient and sympathetic friend.

My father was Robert Pleydell Wilton. My mother's name before she married him was Georgiana Jane Faulkner. I am one of six surviving children born to them, all of whom were girls. How it came to pass that I had any ability as an actress, I could never understand; neither my father nor my mother being born to the stage, so to speak, nor was either of them distinguished in their adopted calling.

My father came of an old Gloucestershire family, and was originally intended for the Church; but that idea was soon abandoned, for he was infatuated with an early love for the stage. He first tried the sea, however, then the law, and in a fit of martial ardour, having quarrelled with his father, he enlisted as a soldier; but, after serving his King and country for twenty-four hours, he regretted his hasty step and implored to be bought out. His father declined, but his mother came to the rescue, as mothers always do, and so ended my father's brief military career. He then returned to his favourite books (Shakespeare's plays), and fancied himself in turn the hero of them all; his love for the drama was a great anxiety to his parents and friends, but it grew upon him more and

more, and eventually he left his home to become an actor, and so laid the foundation-stone of my stage-life.

At that time, far more than now, the profession of the stage was looked upon by many with great horror. To be an actor meant exile from home, family, friends, and general respectability. This was my father's lot; none of his belongings ever knew him again, and when he died, he and his only surviving brother had not spoken to each other for more than forty years.

My father, as I have often heard him say with a sigh of regret, was of an unsettled, restless nature, and a great anxiety at home, his mother, of course, clinging to him as only mothers do cling to those of their children who are, to say the least, tiresome. My father had no idea of money, no thought for the morrow; he was generous to a fault, and if he had but a few shillings in his pocket, he would share his little fortune with anyone in trouble; he had a beautiful tenor voice—a gift he was too careless ever to cultivate properly; he possessed many accomplishments, but practised none; in fact, I fear I must describe him as a handsome, thoughtless, kind-hearted 'Bohemian.'

My father's mother was a Miss Wise, daughter of the Rev. William Wise, who was a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, and afterwards for seventeen years Rector of St. James's, Liverpool, and sister to the Rev. William Wise, D.D., also a Fellow of St. John's, and for twenty-one years Rector of St. Laurence, Reading. Several members of my father's family were clergymen, soldiers, and doctors, well known in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Three of them have been Mayors of Gloucester during this century. John Pleydell Wilton was almost a local Whittington, as he filled the office twice.

My maternal grandmother was a Miss Watts Browne, daughter of General Browne. She married Mr. Samuel Faulkner; 'Gentleman' Faulkner he was called, on account of his courtly manner and irreproachable character. He was either one of the proprietors or the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, then a leading London newspaper; and was a highly gifted man—a profound scholar, and master of many languages. He might have made a name in the literary or political world had he not, unfortunately, been deluded into joining a partnership, and putting his money into the management of the York Circuit (to which my old friend, the celebrated Mrs. Keeley, once belonged in my grandfather's time); but, knowing next to nothing of theatrical matters, and owing partly to the treachery of others (which I will not further dwell on here), lost all he possessed. These reverses, added to the death of his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, pressed so heavily upon him as seriously to affect his mind. He sank into a state of hopeless melancholia, and ended by committing suicide, leaving his orphan children—two sons (one of whom was afterwards in the Army, the other in the Navy) and three girls—to the guardianship of a rich

uncle, who paid all my grandfather's liabilities. The account of this sad event was edged with black in the columns of the *Morning Chronicle*, out of regard for his memory. My father, who was much older than my mother, when but a travelling actor, met and ran away with her. His rashness cost them dear; their future lot for many years being little else than toil, anxiety, and care.

Often in later life have I sat with them by the fireside on a winter's night, when they have recalled to me stories of my childhood, and events in our early days together, which have carried me painfully back to the past, and brought many a tear to my eyes. My father would at such times dwell upon his love for his mother, who, had she lived, would by her gentle influence have brought him back, even if he had wandered for a time; but she was dead, and with her died the olive-branch which made peace between father and son. Dazzled by the surface-glitter of the stage, he went his way, building castles in the air, living in dreamland, and hoping for a position which never came to him. My poor father made his choice, and the moment he stepped on to the stage (only to sing in a chorus) he, in the estimation of his friends, struck the fatal key-note to his destruction. He had been defiled, and nothing could wash him clean again. He paid dearly for his folly all the rest of his life. Had he been wiser, he might have been somebody, and have held a position in society to which he was by birth entitled; my mother spared a life of anxiety and care, and I should never have been born. However, so it was, and so it is, and here I am!

Having shown, when very young, ability beyond my years, being taught when but four or five years old to recite poems and dramatic scenes, I was brought out as a child-actress, although hardly able to speak plainly. It was thought a great achievement then to stand alone on a big stage and recite. What a nuisance I must have been! Luckily the fashion does not exist nowadays. Fortunate children! fortunate public! I wish I could recall a happy childhood; but, alas! I can remember only work and responsibility from a very tender age. No games, no romps, no toys—nothing which makes a child's life joyous. I can recollect a doll, but not the time to play with it, for we only met at night, when it shared my pillow; and as I looked into its face, before I fell asleep after my work, I often wished that I could play with it sometimes.

When other children were cosily tucked up in bed, dreaming of their sunny lives, their limbs tired only by the romps and pleasures of the day, I was trudging by my father's side in all weathers to the theatre, where I had to play somebody else's child, or to recite one of the many character sketches which my father had written for me. In one of them I remember I used to be dressed as a little jockey; in another, as a wee sailor, in little white trousers and blue jacket; the miniature hornpipe I danced being always sure of earning loud applause, and it often had to be repeated. I was, of

course, much petted by the public ; but oh, the work ! My poor little body was often sadly tired ; I was roused many a time from a sound sleep to go upon the stage, and sometimes, in my half-wakefulness, would begin the wrong recitation.

Up again betimes in the morning ; a hasty kiss to my doll, who grew to be regarded as a confirmed invalid, and never left her bed, except for a short time on Sundays ; part of the early day being spent in learning some fresh part, or in being taught lessons by my mother—to me a joyful labour, as I always had a great desire to learn, and even when quite a little child, so anxious was I to be able to read, I have frequently stopped people to explain and spell with me the names of streets, and would cut out the big letters from play-bills and put them together to form words : perhaps early copies made of my father's and my mother's letters, although not able to read them, may account for my eccentric half-masculine, half-feminine handwriting. Once I rebelled while reciting as a little gipsy : I was discovered at a wood-fire, with a hanging-kettle over it, my father being at one side of the stage, and my mother on the other, ready to prompt me. My father gave me the words I recited, and my mother followed them with the expression of countenance I should assume at certain passages ; so I looked from one to the other for my cue. But on this particular night my small temper had been upset, and I somehow got mixed. When my father saw that I was nearly breaking down in the words, I assumed his angry expression of face, although I ought to have been smiling, and imitated the encouraging face of my mother when I should have been sad. To the great horror of my parents, when I went forward to tell the audience their fortunes, I saw our landlady in the front row of the pit, her face beaming with delight at my performance. I dropped my little basket of songs and cards, and stretched out my arms to her, crying, 'No, no ; me no stage—me go pit.' The next time our landlady witnessed one of my performances it was from a more elevated position—the gallery !

At the age of five I recited Collins's *Ode to the Passions*, being accompanied by the special music. I wore a white lace frock and a lovely blue sash, of which I was very proud ; it was winter-time, and my mother has told me since that my poor little arms and legs were so red through the cold that I represented a tricolour, and ought to have recited the *Marseillaise* instead !

Among the selections I had to learn as a child were the 'Trial scene from the *Merchant of Venice*,' the 'Balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*,' the 'Sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth*,' and 'Satan's Address to the Sun.' My dear mother toiled night and day to drill the words into my young head. Although, as I have said, she never held a position on the stage, her talent for teaching was very great ; the art of elocution in her school-days being a branch of education, and lectures on the subject were delivered to the pupils by competent professors. She thus was able to give me what I

never could have hoped to attain by other means, a knowledge of elocution and voice-production, to which I owe the power of making every word heard, even in a whisper, in any building, however large.

I have never forgotten a little lecture which my mother gave me in order to impress upon my young mind the necessity of making myself heard by the entire audience; she thought of a plan by which she could touch my feelings, as I suppose she found it difficult to make me quite understand, at that early age, the meaning of making the voice travel round the house. She said: 'There is a poor man who is the last to get into the gallery, and consequently only has a corner in the back row of all, therefore he sees and hears with great difficulty; he has been working hard and has saved his sixpence to give himself a little treat. How dreadful then it would be to find that he cannot hear what the actors are talking about! how he must envy those more fortunate than himself, and how unhappy he must be! Think of him when you are acting; direct your voice to the poor man who is sitting at the very back of the gallery, and he will be grateful to you.'

My mother has often reminded me that as a child I was difficult to manage: impetuous, wilful, enthusiastic, ambitious; easy to lead, difficult to command; a long speech in anger would fail to affect me, but a few gentle words would quickly conquer me. This appeal to my better nature therefore succeeded, for ever afterwards I addressed myself to the 'poor man' at the back of the gallery, as, of course, if he heard me, the rest of the audience must.

To show in what estimation country folk held the stage in my childhood days, I will tell what happened to me at an amateur entertainment which was given to aid a church-building fund. The programme was a varied one; my contribution of one or two recitations caused a flutter of admiration, especially amongst the ladies present, many of whom were district visitors, and expressed their approval loudly, in such remarks as, 'Wonderful!' '*Most* interesting!' 'Dear little thing!' 'How clever!' When the entertainment was over, these ladies asked to be allowed to speak to me. I was taken to them, and passed from one to another, undergoing meanwhile a kind of inspection; they kissed and petted me. 'What a sweet child!' said one. 'You must come some day to see mamma.' 'What lovely hair!' said another: the fuss they made about me was overpowering.

The gentleman who led me to them suggested to these ladies that they might subscribe a small sum to buy me a toy, as a souvenir of the occasion. They consented eagerly, and at once opened their clasped bags. While hunting for their purses, they asked with sweet smiles 'whose dear child I was.' When told that I was the daughter of an actor, the smiles vanished, and the expressions changed in a way to have turned even lemons sour. The bags were closed with a cold relentless click, and the owners muttered between their teeth (for fear, doubtless, of breathing the same air as

myself), 'Oh, gracious!' 'Horrid!' 'Oh dear!' 'Unfortunate child!' and drew back from me as if plague-stricken. This scene dwelt upon my young mind, and I never forgot it. The poor ladies doubtless returned home scandalized and defiled: but the church did not suffer; the few bricks to which I subscribed have kept their places and have not quarrelled with the others on my account.

There seemed to me to be constant travelling in my childhood days; I cannot remember a settled home, and recall only a very restless life. Even at that early age I was aware of the responsibility of being at my post when required. Fines were often discussed in my presence with dread; and every day, as the hour drew near for rehearsals, I would run upstairs to put on my hat and pelisse, and call out to my father that we must make haste or we should be late. My anxiety to be 'in time' was always very great. Once when the company was about to start for one of the towns in the Norwich circuit, to which we were attached, my mother, having been informed that I should not be wanted for a fortnight, decided upon leaving me for part of it with the family in whose house we lodged, and who were fond of me. My parents had not been gone three days, when a letter arrived from them, saying that the *Green Bushes* was to be acted in a hurry the next night instead of something else. I, as the child-actress of the company, had often played Eveleen, so I was to be sent off at once. Preparations were immediately made for my departure, but as we arrived at the station we saw the last train moving away. My distress was terrible. I at once thought of the rehearsal the next morning; I was too young to argue that having played the part so frequently it would not much matter; I only knew that fines were the punishment for absence from duty, and I must go somehow. The people with whom I was staying did all in their power to pacify me, but I persisted that I must go. It happened that a cart, or covered van, filled with sacks of meal or flour, was going that night to a village not far from my destination. The driver offered to take charge of me, and remarked, when he saw my anxiety, that he had 'no idea play-acting people was so perticlar.' The husband of our landlady decided to accompany me, and away we started. My bed was made at the bottom of the cart in some hay between the sacks, and really I was not uncomfortable. The driver's little dog made friends with me, and I slept with him in my arms. The cart shook a good bit, but so happy was I, knowing that every mile took me nearer to my duty, that I slept the sleep of a contented child. We stopped at a roadside inn to rest the horses, when I was lifted out of the cart and taken to sit by the fire. I can well remember some roughish-looking men sitting about. There was a large fire, with a curious-looking tin saucepan, shaped like a fool's cap turned upside down, and filled with hot ale, in which eggs were beaten up. The men, who were all smoking, soon got into conversation with my two guardians. They looked very hard at me, and asked all sorts of

questions ; who I was, how I came to be there with them, and one of them jokingly remarked, 'You ain't been a-kidnapping, 'ave you?' I felt indignant at this, knowing how good they had both been to me. An explanation of the case interested them, and when they were told who I was, they shouted, 'What! a play-actor?' and immediately requested the driver of the cart to ask me to 'do a piece.' 'Will ye, child?' he said. I shook my head, and he continued, 'I won't ask the little lass ; she's tired.' This touched me, and I at once jumped up and recited something ; I forget what, but I caused such enthusiasm that I thought they would all eat me. I had to do another 'piece' for them, and by this time everyone employed about the inn, hearing that something unusual was going on, had assembled. I shall never forget the scene, which Dickens could have wonderfully described. The villagers, smoking and drinking ; my two guardians sitting together, and smiling as if they were responsible for the talent displayed ; the landlord and his wife standing in the doorway, and several heads peering over theirs ; the windows thrown open, and stable-boys and farm-labourers sitting on the window-sills with their mouths wide open. I thought they were all idiots, for they laughed like them. When I had finished, murmurs of 'Eh, that's foin!' and 'Wonderful, ain't it?' came from all of them. The moment arrived for starting. How thankful I was! They all came to the door to see me off, and the rough but kindly men treated me like a little queen. Although I was glad to get away from this strange society, I did not regret having given them a little amusement. But when they asked me for a kiss at parting, I didn't know what to do, for they all smelt of beer. I had 'roughed it' a good deal, but there were limits! When I said I would not permit them to kiss me, one of them replied, 'We ain't gentlefolk, surely ; but you are a little angel, and we ain't used to the loiks of yer.' I thought to myself, it will make them happy, and it won't take a minute ; so I presented my cheek to them, at which they laughed, but kissed it. I was lifted into the cart as carefully as if it had been a grand carriage, and we drove off. I settled into my bed of hay and sacks, and after well wiping my cheek, where they had left their beer-marks, I went to sleep again. When I arrived at the theatre early in the morning, escorted by one of my guardians, who told the whole story, I received a scolding for my pains. I must have presented a strange appearance, for my clothes and hair were covered with meal from the sacks, and some one remarked that I looked as if my clothes had suffered a bad illness.

Soon after this we found ourselves at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, where I was the child actress of the company, and appeared in the pantomime of *Gulliver's Travels* as the little 'Emperor of Lilliput'—a very tiny monarch. A gentleman who played one of the parts in this pantomime attracted my attention, and I can well remember the incident.

Children are all, more or less, prone to express their thoughts, and give their opinions at the most awkward moments. I was particularly celebrated in this way ; my early training for the stage naturally sharpened my powers of observation, and any eccentricity of manner, or an unusual physical peculiarity, immediately attracted my notice ; and, if I did not happen to express in words my interest and astonishment, I continued to look so long with a puzzled and inquiring face, that the poor creature, whoever it might be, became more and more uncomfortable. I, of course, was perfectly unconscious of the discomfiture I was creating, and would, with a wrinkled brow and wondering stare, fix my eyes upon the, to me, unaccountable freak of nature.

This particular gentleman happened to be severely pitted and disfigured by deep marks of that terrible disease, small-pox. I could not take my eyes from his face ; wherever he went I followed, and stood gazing at him, until at last he said abruptly, 'What on earth are you staring at, child?' I replied in thoughtless innocence, 'I'm looking at your face ; it's like a crumpet!' It will be readily understood that this inquiring and observant nature was an anxiety to my mother, who tried very hard by threats, scoldings, and entreaties to break me of it ; but in spite of promises of better behaviour, I could not resist the temptation whenever it occurred.

One day a friend of my father's, whom he had not seen for years, had been invited to a Sunday dinner ; and as a treat my father requested that I should be allowed to sit at table. This gentleman was unfortunately afflicted with an enormous bluish nose, which was absolutely remarkable. My mother urged the danger of my being in the room, for she was certain that it would attract my attention at once, and she would suffer tortures. But my father said that if I was prepared for the peculiarity before seeing the gentleman, and warned that if I said anything I should be turned out of the room (a fearful indignity to me), he was sure it would be all right. I was duly cautioned by my mother, who told me that to take any marked notice of the gentleman would not only make her angry, but would wound his feelings besides, as he was sensitive on that subject. I promised faithfully that I would not utter a word. When seated at table, the sight of this extraordinary feature almost took my breath away ; it was the largest nose I had ever seen out of a pantomime, and take my eyes off it I could not. My mother, whenever she could by kicks and looks attract my attention (which was seldom, for it was fixed on the nose), looked daggers at me. She suffered agonies until dinner was over, and was much relieved when the moment came to kiss me and say good-night. She then whispered 'Good child.' With pride and delight I returned to my father's side, and asked him if I had been good ; when he kissed me I shouted with glee, 'I didn't say anything about the gentleman's blue nose, did I, father?' *Tableau!*

I can just remember Macready playing his farewell engagement

in the country, before retiring from the stage. In *Macbeth* I acted the part of the boy Fleance, and also appeared as the apparition of the crowned child who rises from the caldron when summoned by the witches, to warn the guilty Thane. At the end of the play the great tragedian sent for me, and I was taken by my mother to his room. I was terribly nervous, for I had heard so many people say how proud and distant Macready always was, and I feared I was summoned to be scolded. My mother knocked at the door, and a deep tragic 'Come in' sent my little heart into my boots. We still waited at the door; his valet opened it, and there was the great actor seated in a large easy-chair, his head resting upon his hand, and looking, as I thought, very tired and cross; the room was dimly lighted. We hesitated, not knowing quite what to do, when the voice from the chair said in measured tones, dwelling upon each syllable, 'Who-is-it?' I felt awe-stricken, as though still in the presence of a king. The dresser said, 'It's the little girl you sent for, sir.' Macready answered, 'Oh yes! turn up the gas,' much in the same tone in which he had said, 'Duncan comes here to-night.' But he looked at me kindly, and said very gently, 'Come here, child,' holding out his hand. I went to him; he patted me on the head and kissed me; then, after looking at me for a moment, said: 'Well, I suppose you hope to be a great actress some day?' I replied quickly, 'Yes, sir.' He smiled. 'And what do you intend to play?' 'Lady Macbeth, sir,' upon which he laughed loudly and said: 'Oh! is that all? Well, I like your ambition; you are a strange little thing, and have such curious eyes; but you must change them before you play Lady Macbeth, or you will make your audience laugh instead of cry.' I did not quite like this; but he soon won my heart by saying: 'Will you have a sovereign to buy a doll with, or a glass of wine?' After a little hesitation, I answered, 'I should like both, I think.' He seemed to enjoy my frank reply, and said laughingly, 'Good! I am sure you will make a fine actress; I can see genius through those little windows,' placing his hands over my eyes. 'But do not play Lady Macbeth too soon; begin slowly, or you may end quickly!' I drank my wine, took my sovereign, and went home rejoicing, feeling as proud as any little peacock. The great man had condescended to pat me on the head, and had absolutely kissed me. I did not want to wash my face again!

It was at Manchester that Miss Glyn came to the theatre as a 'star,' accompanied by Charles Kemble, whose pupil she was. Although he was now very old and deaf, I remember well the impression he made upon me at a rehearsal when I crept into the wings and saw them go through the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*. Not a word or gesture escaped me; I was much impressed, and I determined that I *must* some day play Lady Macbeth. That day has not yet arrived!

King John was also produced for Miss Glyn, and I played Prince

Arthur: Charles Kemble was in a private box at night, watching the play. In the scene where the little prince is trying to escape from his prison, and falls from the battlements, I suddenly heard the sound of some one talking out loud, and then a laugh somewhere in the theatre. I became nervous, and thought something must have happened to my dress. I dared not move, for fear of causing more laughter, and there I lay in terrible suspense until I was carried off by Hubert. I was then told that Mr. Kemble had suddenly become very excited, had stood up in the stage-box, and shouted out something quite loudly; no one could tell me what he had said, but an account of it appeared afterwards in some of the papers, one of which I have by me now, headed, 'The Veteran and the Child.' 'Charles Kemble sat anxiously watching the progress of the play of *King John*. He seldom applauded, and, for the most part, seemed saddened, perhaps by the memories of those halcyon days when his great brother was the King, and he the gallant Falconbridge; but the scene between Hubert and Prince Arthur awoke his approving smiles. More than once he clapped his hands, and when the little prince fell from the battlements, and the young actress exclaimed, with exquisite pathos—

> "'Ah me, my uncle's spirit's in these stones;
> Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones!'

the old actor was so carried away by his enthusiasm as to rise in the box where he was sitting, and exclaim: "That girl will be a great actress." "That girl" was Marie Wilton.'

I was sent for by Charles Kemble, and complimented very warmly by him, and by Miss Glyn. Oddly enough, the old gentleman repeated Macready's advice to me: 'Climb not the ladder too quickly, or you may come suddenly to the ground again.' He spoke very kindly, but every question he asked I was obliged to answer with a shout. When he said, 'You spoke your lines beautifully,' I replied: 'Oh! but you are deaf, sir; you could not hear me.' He laughed and answered: 'I could see your words, child; your little face spoke them. But why wear a wig? The hair was too long.' I answered quickly, 'I wear no wig, sir; it was my own hair,' upon which he seemed surprised, and said: 'Bless the child, I thought it was a wig.' I was a little indignant at this remark, for my mother took great pride in my hair, carefully brushing it night and morning for so long that my father remarked once, 'That child will soon have no brains—you will brush them all out!'

While at Manchester I was a pupil of Mademoiselle Cushnie, the *première danseuse*, when, through some accident in practising, an injury was done to my foot, and I suffered acute pain. No one seemed to understand what was the matter. At length it was discovered that a tiny bone had been displaced, and I could not put my foot to the ground. I was a cripple on crutches for a consider-

able time, the only part I was able to play being poor Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol;* and I still retain a most agreeable recollection of the plum-pudding which we had to eat upon the stage. At length, after careful nursing, I happily recovered the use of my foot, though for a long while my health was delicate, and caused my mother much anxiety.

When, through my lameness, I was not acting, I was taken now and then as a treat to a travelling circus, well known as Pablo Fanque's, which was then in the town ; and this reminds me of our eccentric landlady, who rejoiced in the proud name of O'Brien. In appearance she was a tall, gaunt, lean woman, with high cheek-bones, pale blue eyes, a white and much freckled skin, and a mass of fiery red hair which she seldom brushed, and fastened at the top of her head with a single hair-pin. This poor lady had a mania that her husband, had he lived, would have been a rightful claimant to the throne of Ireland ; but as there was not one, nor a likelihood of one, he thought he would not wait : Mrs. O Brien's presence was not sufficient temptation for him to 'lag superfluously' on this earth, so he died, leaving her to bewail the fact of having to reside in an unpretentious house, situated in a still more unpretentious street, instead of enjoying the O'Brien rights and passing her life in a palace.

We never ascertained what particular palace she laid claim to, so concluded it to be somewhere in the clouds. Her only son, whom she always addressed as 'Master O'Brien,' answered to his mother's description in appearance as far as hair, eyes, and freckles went. He was a puny, scared-looking creature, and might remind one of Squeers' boys : his thin legs were too long for his trousers, and his thinner arms were ditto as regards his jacket, while his head looked as if every red hair had quarrelled with its neighbour ; a sharp, cold-looking nose, of the chronic influenza type, getting pink towards the end, while his scraggy neck resembled that of a recently-plucked elderly chicken. This rare specimen of humanity, who was constantly forced into notice as 'the heir to the throne of Ireland,' was not permitted to enjoy life like other boys. Mrs. O'Brien strictly forbade him to mix with those who, of necessity, were beneath him, and the poor lad was made to sit on a very high stool during a great part of the day—as a kind of rehearsal, perhaps, of the regal position he might hold should his claims ever be recognised—gazing at the crownless head of Mrs. O'Brien, except when the aforesaid hair-pin would drop out : then he would descend, and with a low bow restore it to the hands of his deluded mother. One morning Master O'Brien, under the impression that his mother was out, actually summoned up courage to join in a game of leapfrog with some other boys in the street. Suddenly his pleasure was interrupted by the ghost-like appearance of his indignant parent on the doorstep. She glanced at her only son, and roared out, just as he was in the act of leaping over another

boy's back, 'Master O'Brien! Master O'Brien! it's handing your mamma to her carriage ye ought to be, and not Pablo Fanqueing it about the streets!'

Poor Mrs. O'Brien could boast of no better vehicle than a wheelless barrow in the back-yard; but she felt she ought to have her carriage, and that was enough. With all her eccentricity she was kindly-natured, and her delusions hurt no one.

Brighter days seemed in store for us when my father, I believe, heard some news of a brother; his delight was intense, for, though they had not met for years, he was confident that a reconciliation would take place, and that all anxiety about our precarious position would cease. Oh, the castles that my father built in the 'airiest of situations!' assuring my mother that she and her children would now be placed in their proper positions, and that servants were at once to be engaged to wait upon us; but his dreams of magnificence (which always led people to believe that we were better off than we really were) were soon dispelled. My mother, who never relied for one moment upon her husband's vague dreams, continued to train us up to wait upon ourselves.

My poor father's character was very like that of Micawber, with a strong dash of dear old Triplet, always hoping for 'something to turn up,' and always looking on the sunny side, however bad things seemed to be. Dear old dad—his bright nature helped us through many a trouble. Often and often when our spirits were low he would tell us anecdotes and stories of his early stage-days, one of which comes now to my mind, and always struck me as being very amusing. It was, and is still, I think, a custom in country theatres when a military play is acted, and men are required on the stage as soldiers, for the Colonel of the regiment then quartered in the town to lend a certain number of his men to the manager, who were glad, for good conduct, to add a little money to their pay. I forget the name of the play, and the town in which it took place, but the regiment was an Irish one. At the end of an act a decisive battle was fought between the two armies; the soldiers were represented on the one side by men attached to the theatre, and on the other by regulars from the garrison.

On this particular occasion the performance was a 'bespeak' night, and 'under the patronage of the Colonel and officers of the regiment,' all of whom, of course, were present. Everything went well up to the battle-scene, when the signal was given for the fight to cease, and for the regulars, who personated the beaten foe, to retreat; but on this eventful evening they took no notice. The actor who appeared as one of the commanding officers kept shouting to them, 'Retreat! why don't you retreat?' They still fought on in terrible earnest, and punished their opponents so unmercifully that at last they threw down their arms and used their fists instead. The result was a real all-round scrimmage. Actors concerned in the scene shouted to the men to retreat, as they had done quietly

enough night after night ; the commanding officer calling at the top of his voice, 'Retreat ! I tell you, retreat !' Eventually the curtain had to be dropped on the conflict, when the manager, who made an angry appearance on the stage, furiously asked the men, 'What does all this mean ? why didn't you retreat ?' To which one of the soldiers, a sergeant with his face much damaged, replied indignantly, 'Is it retrate you'd have us, *with the Colonel in front? Divil a bit !*'

During my early life a wealthy Roman Catholic widow lady took a great fancy to me, and besought my father to allow her to adopt me, to place me in a convent for education, and, on leaving it, to return to my parents from time to time, her conditions being that I should assume her name, and never appear upon the stage again. In return for all this, her fortune would be left me. I used often to attend early mass, being taken to the church by the late Edmund Falconer, the author of *Peep o' Day* and other Irish dramas, who was then a member of the company we belonged to. I merely mention this incident to show that I had an early love for the Catholic faith, which only slept for so many years afterwards. I often reflect how changed things might have been had my father consented, and how different my position in the world !

After further wanderings—we seemed to be always 'moving on' —we joined the company of the Bristol Theatre, of which Mr. James Henry Chute was manager. My first appearance there was in the opening of a pantomime as 'No-Wun-No-Zoo, Spright of the Silver Star ;' the sky opened, and I was discovered high up in the clouds, prettily dressed in pale blue silk and spangles, my long hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders. As I was lowered by machinery, which every now and then gave an uncomfortable jerk, I was conscious of an anxious look upon my face, and feared the great tragedian's words, 'Climb not the ladder too quickly, or you may tumble when you least expect it,' were about to be realized. I was instructed to come down with a happy smile upon my face, but the expression must have resembled the fixed stare one sees on a photograph after the victim's long and tedious sitting. My voice was very thin, and not improved by my anxiety to get safely landed on the stage, so I fear I did not distinguish myself in these opening words of my song :

> 'Ah ! No-Wun-No-Zoo will astonish a few,
> For he fancies it's rather a thing that will do ;
> And folks with surprise will open their eyes,
> When they turn to a page of this comical size.'

The *Bristol Mercury* thus kindly spoke of my *début* there : 'The "dark vaulted ether" suddenly discloses a brilliant star, from whose effulgence emerges No-Wun-No-Zoo, which character was played by a clever, and we must add exceedingly pretty girl, who made a first appearance—Miss M. Wilton.'

I gradually became a great favourite, and was happy in Bristol,

where there was a most excellent company, many of whom have since been well known. It was an admirably conducted theatre, and will always be remembered by me as my stepping-stone to London. Mr. Chute was an excellent manager ; a severe disciplinarian, but a tender-hearted and just man. His wife, who was related to Macready, was a most kindly lady, and I remember her goodness to me with much gratitude. Fines were strictly inflicted in those days ; but I have known Mr. Chute many a time return, privately, the forfeit-money to those who he knew could ill afford to spare it, saying, 'Do not say anything about it, and do not be late again'— a good, kind-hearted, severe old manager. The work was hard, but some of our best artists have left the old King Street Theatre to fill leading positions in London. Names that come at once to my mind are Kate and Ellen Terry, Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal), Henrietta Hodson, and Charles Coghlan. Oh for a few such theatres now as that, or the old Edinburgh Theatre, so admirably governed for years by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wyndham ! We should not then have to bewail the fact that there are no longer schools for young actors and actresses to serve, as it were, a proper apprenticeship by playing every line of character in the theatrical pharmacopœia, from farcical comedy to high tragedy, under the direction of an able stage-manager, before settling on the branch of art in which to seek and work for future excellence ; just as a general practitioner, after studying the anatomy of the entire human frame, becomes a specialist.

My mother wished me to be a comedy actress, and so to that end she and I worked very hard every day in a little quiet room at the back of the house we lodged in, and where she taught me how valuable and how necessary was the knowledge of elocution. Some of the counsel of those years gone by I repeated, almost word for word, in Mr. Burnand's little play, *A Lesson*. With her help and instruction ever before me, I toiled on with a determination to earn a high position. In country theatres young actors were frequently called upon, through illness or other causes, to play parts quite beyond their power and much beyond their years. I may say that during my provincial life, young as I was, I was made Jack-of-all-trades, acting anything and everything. Once at a minor country theatre during the Bristol vacation, a 'star' actor, well known in those days, came down for a short period, and commenced the engagement as Claude Melnotte in the *Lady of Lyons*. The actress who was to have played his widowed mother was taken ill, and there being no one else in the theatre to do it, I was told to study the part in a few hours, and do the best I could with it. The prompter rehearsed the scenes with the company, and the Claude Melnotte, who was at least old enough to be my father, was not aware of his mother's age until he met her on the stage at night. I had on a gray wig which was too big for me, and would keep slipping on one side, crowned, as it was, by a tall mob-cap. The

effect must have been comical, because the moment I was discovered the audience began to titter. Some one from the wings called out, 'Put your cap straight; it is all on one side.' In my effort to do so, I conclude I must have disturbed the gray wig, for the laughter of the audience told me that something was wrong. On came Claude. He began with the well-known line, 'Give me joy, dear mother; I have won the prize!' His eyes met mine and he muttered, 'Who's this?' My miserable attempt to look old, and my small voice calling him 'my son,' so upset him that he was almost speechless. After our first scene was over, he said angrily, 'What does this mean? the whole piece is destroyed.' I was frightened, but explained as well as I could; and seeing my distress, he said, 'Well, my dear, it is not your fault; but surely they might have got some one to look more like my mother. I quite dread the next scene.' However, when we came to it, I got through pretty well, until Pauline had to say, 'Don't weep, mother!' which was greeted with 'Oh's!' When Claude was about to rush out, and I exclaimed, 'Claude, Claude, you will not desert your poor old mother! no divorce can separate a mother from her son!' the audience could restrain themselves no longer, and burst into a loud roar. No more dialogue was heard. Claude, in his embrace, gave me an angry push, which sent my gray wig and mob-cap almost into the orchestra. The curtain fell amidst shouts of laughter, and calls for 'Claude's mother'; to which, let me add, I did not respond.

It was during my stay at Bristol that Mr. Charles Dillon came to play Belphegor, and I was chosen to act the part of the boy Henri, his son; when I rehearsed it, I did so as my mother had taught me, in a natural manner; but Mr. Dillon disapproved, and said, 'This won't do, my dear; you'll kill the piece, and destroy *me!* When I find that my wife, your mother, whom we both adore, has deserted us in our poverty to go away with some one who can give her wealth and luxury, I call upon you to curse her; then my conscience rebukes me, my love overpowers me, and I say to you, "No, no, pray for her—pray for your mother, Henri; pray for her, my boy!" you are overwhelmed with grief, you fall on your knees, look up, and clasp your hands in prayer. Imagine you are saying, "God bless my dear mother, and bring her back to me."' I replied, 'Yes, Mr. Dillon, that is what I was doing; only I can't *imagine* my tears and prayer—I must mean it and cry in earnest.' He answered, 'Yes; but you interrupt *me*. I have to look dazed, stagger to the door, look into the empty room, and faintly mutter, "Madeline! my wife—my wife!" as the curtain falls. All this is very important, so you must be careful, and not say things audibly that take away the attention of the audience; you can mean your grief, but keep it to yourself.' I said, 'Well, but you are going to say things audibly, and beautifully you do it, for you make me cry; surely if my sobs and prayers are faintly heard through your speech it must help you, and it will be natural. I feel the scene so real

that it *makes* me cry. Let me try it again to-morrow at rehearsal; we will ask Mr. Chute to be present, and if he says it is not effective, I will act it as you wish.' He looked wonderingly at me, and then, with a smile, said, 'You are a strange little creature; but it shall be so; the manager shall decide.' So we had our rehearsal, and the scene affected Mr. Chute to tears. He said that if acted in that way it would cause a sensation. When the night came the applause was tremendous, and the success assured.

Mr. Dillon's Belphegor was a truly fine performance, and he admitted that my rendering of Henri materially assisted his acting; but I nearly lost the part through his first want of confidence in me. After the performance Mr. Dillon said, 'Good girl! If ever I have a London theatre, I shall give you an engagement.' Very soon after this he kept his word, for he became manager of the Lyceum, and sent me an offer to play my old part. Mr. Chute strongly advised my mother to accept it, as he thought this a splendid opportunity for me, and that he should expect great things of me in the future. So frightened was I at the bare thought of appearing in London, that I told Mr. Chute, if he would only give me *ever* so little more salary, I would remain at Bristol. But he, knowing that it was important for me to make a successful *début* in London, and believing also that I should take a step up the ladder of fame as Belphegor's son, out of kindness refused. I thought it mean of him at the time, but I have thanked him since. He knew that a chance like this might never, or for a long time at least, befall me again.

When he bade me good bye, he said, 'Have courage. If you fail, and are not happy, come back to Bristol.'

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG DAYS AT THE LYCEUM, THE HAYMARKET, AND THE ADELPHI.

In London—J. L. Toole—An unkind stage-manager—Mr. Dillon to the rescue—Perdita in Brough's extravaganza, *A Winter's Tale*—Trouble about the dress—A pair of pink silk boots—Success of *Belphegor*—Called before the curtain—Encouragement from the Press—Toole's birthday present—*Conrad and Medora*—Edmund Yates's praise—Virginia—A jerky right arm, and its cure—Offers from Webster and Buckstone—At the Haymarket—Meeting with the foe: a crushing rejoinder—Brough and Talfourd—A little romance—A mad admirer—Disappointment at the Adelphi—Nothing to do—Wright and Paul Bedford—*Cupid and Psyche*—Illness—Mistaken identity—Engaged for the Strand Theatre—Cupid once more—The story of a pearl necklace.

How big London seemed to me! I felt as if the houses were going to fall on us; and in the vast city, with so much going on, there seemed to be no room for me. A restless, crowded, get-one-

before-the-other city, I felt it an impertinence to try for a place in its rushing stream of humanity. So full, and yet to us so empty, for my mother and I were without a soul to advise or a friend to help us, having left my father at Bristol. My salary was to be three pounds a week; of course things were cheaper then than they are now, or I don't know what we should have done. When I went to the first rehearsal everything around me looked so grand that I felt quite ashamed of my poor country clothes. Some of the people looked me up and down with a kind of sneer, wondering, I dare say, where I and my clothes had been picked up, and as if it were presumption for me to stand too near them. I had never seen so many people all at once upon a stage before; but I felt as solitary and chilled as a room in winter seems without a fire in it. My mother, in former years, had known two members of the company; but as we were down in the world they did not care to recognise us. They all seemed to know one another, and I envied them as I watched them chatting together. I felt nervous and shy, and kept close to my mother's side, who every now and then whispered some tender words to give me courage. I will ask the reader to imagine for an instant our two lone figures standing apart from everybody, when a friendly smile would have put a little sun into our hearts. At last my name was suddenly called out, and I felt as if I had been shot! My mother said, 'Go forward, dear, and show yourself.' I did go forward, and made about as much sensation as a pin would in falling on a haystack. I was glad to get away, and on the road home I remarked, 'They must all have larger salaries than mine, mother, they are dressed so well.' She laughed, and said, 'They are established favourites, you see. You will one day earn a large salary too; and remember, should you then ever see a stranger poorly dressed, waiting and wishing for a kind word, don't turn away, but hold out a helping hand if you can.' I looked at her, saw the tears in her eyes, and understood her meaning.

We found lodgings just over Waterloo Bridge; our rooms were humble, but my mother was a good manager, and, as usual, kept up a comfortable little home on our slender means. I was at rehearsal every morning, and gradually became more accustomed to the large theatre and its surroundings. The stage-manager was one of those who had known my parents in the country some years before. When he was in needy circumstances they had often helped him, and my mother had nursed him through an illness. 'Go to him,' she said, 'tell him whose daughter you are, and he will be kind to you, I'm sure.' I *did* go to him, and I *did* tell him who I was. He laughed and said, 'Well, what of that?' I could not answer, as I knew no more, so I returned to my place, blushing and ashamed. He was always harsh to me, calling me to account for every small mistake in the roughest way. He knew that I was nobody, and I suppose presumed upon it.

Let me revert to a happier memory. It was at the Lyceum that I first became acquainted with Mr. J. L. Toole, who, although he had acted before in London, had still his fame to make, and was engaged for the comic part of Fanfaronade in *Belphegor*. During the rehearsals he would often cheer me up with some kindly joke, and constantly after the second act (in which was my principal scene) he would whisper, with a merry smile, 'Twenty pounds a week insisted upon, I think, after the first appearance.'

Greatly to my relief, during the rehearsals of *Belphegor* my *un*-amiable stage-manager was taken ill, and for days was unable to attend them. Oh, joy, he was ill, and we rehearsed without him! All then went smoothly; Mr. Dillon was so kind and encouraging that I went home rejoicing, hoping that the illness might last until the first night was over; but my enemy came back in three days, and I am uncharitable enough to own that never was I so sorry to hear of a recovery. However, when he again raised his voice to object, Mr. Dillon came to the rescue, and saved me from further trouble on that head.

It was entirely through an accident—how often do they govern the chief events in life!—that I first acted in London in burlesque. One morning during a rehearsal, news came that the young lady who was cast for Perdita, the little milkmaid in William Brough's extravaganza of *A Winter's Tale*, in which Toole played Autolycus, which was to be produced with *Belphegor*, had been taken ill, so Mrs. Dillon came hurriedly to with me the part, saying, 'My dear child, we are in a fix; I know the notice is short, but you must do it.'

I had to learn both words and music in a few days. Knowing something of music, I found but little difficulty so far; but my voice was poor and thin, and remembering the largeness of the theatre, and how particular a London audience was, I was terribly nervous, and feared, if I failed, to destroy any favourable effect I might produce in *Belphegor*. My troubles were not lessened when I was told that I must provide my own dress. Where, oh, where was it to come from? my poor three pounds a week not having begun yet. I went home with the dreadful news to my mother, who, after considering a while, said in her comforting way, 'I can manage something out of the material which I have by me; study your part, think only of that, and I will make your dress myself.'

Oh, my mother! when I look back upon those struggling days, I feel that I can never be sufficiently grateful to you for all your forbearance, your fortitude, your patience; what could I have done, but for you? I was informed next day that my boots must be pale pink silk, to match the stockings. I could see that very little would be left out of my first salary; but it was useless to fret, so I went off to a shop where they were in the habit of making stage-boots, and boldly ordered mine, but was politely informed that as I was a stranger I must pay for them in advance. My mother and I went

out together on a voyage of discovery, but at every likely shop we entered we were told that the time was too short, and that they would cost—oh ! well, ever so much more than we could afford.

We were in despair, and going home with heavy hearts, when, with a sigh, I looked into the window of a little insignificant shop in the Waterloo Road, with great heavy ugly boots big enough for me to live in and receive friends. My mother smiled at my stopping even to look at these thick, clod-hopping things, and said, 'Come home, dear ; we must search again to-morrow.' I made up my mind suddenly to go into the shop—something seemed to urge me. I told my mother so. She remarked that it was indeed a forlorn hope ; but having a strong dash of my father's bright nature in me, always hoping for the best, I said, 'Who knows ? In the most unlikely place, and at the most unexpected moment, I may be successful. I'll try, mother ; wish me luck !' In I went, and asked the man if he had such a thing as a pair of pale-pink silk boots. I had asked the same question so often, that I stumbled over the words. The man said in a loud, common voice, 'No, no ; we don't make your fancy fal-lals here. You must go to the West-End for those dandified goods ; we don't wear them in the Waterloo Road.'

I was about to leave the shop, thinking how foolish I must look, when a woman's voice from the inner room called out, 'I say, stop, miss !'—here she appeared—'did I 'ear yer say yer wanted a pair of pale pink silk boots ? Well, I believe I 'ave the very thing.' The husband said, 'Why, what are you talking about ?' She went on as though he had not spoken. 'There was a little girl what was to 'ave acted a fairy at the Surrey more nor a year ago ; 'er mother and 'er lodged 'ere. The poor little thing took ill, and 'er mother put 'er into a horspital, and left these lodgings ; she asked me to buy the boots, and, in fact, all 'er things, as she couldn't now use them. So I bought them from 'er, and sold them agin to another party—all but the boots, for they said they was too small for anyone they knew. 'Ere, Billy ! bring them pink boots down from out of the back room : you'll find 'em wrapped up in soft paper on the top shelf in the cupboard. I'm afraid, though, they'll be too small for you, but you can see them.'

How I prayed that those boots might fit ! The clouds seemed to be lifting. Down came Billy with the boots : they were tried on —they fitted me as if they had been made for me. Billy was very dirty, but I could have kissed him. Stay ! I had not yet asked the price. I tremblingly said, 'How much ?' The woman hesitated, reflected, scratched her head, and then rested her chin in her hand, gazing down at the boots, while I tremblingly waited for the verdict. 'Well, they're no use to me, 'anging about 'ere ; you may 'ave them for three-and-sixpence.' I went to the door, called my mother, who was startled by my excited manner, and came hurriedly to me.

'Give me three-and-sixpence, mother.' 'What for ?' 'The

boots! Pale pink silk! Just what I wanted! Fit me beautifully! Belonged to a little girl! Three-and-sixpence!' I gasped all this out, for I was excited, and out of breath, and hardly knew what I was doing. I held my treasured parcel to my heart as I went gaily home, and dreamt of nothing that night but pink silk boots! I felt so happy next morning, and trotted over Waterloo Bridge to rehearsal with a merry, light heart, feeling even strong enough to brave the stage-manager! I sang the music correctly, but my small voice could scarcely be heard with a large band.

My stage-manager stopped me. 'Come, come! this won't do! You don't call that singing, do you? Louder! louder!' I tried it louder, and my voice cracked. He stopped me again, and said, 'My dear young lady, if you don't sing better than this, you must be taken out of the part.' Upon which there was a flutter amongst the other young actresses who were standing about, each one hoping to be called upon to play it, when suddenly the musical director, who saw my troubled face, stopped the band, and said to my *bête noire*: 'Are you the musical director here, sir, as well as the stage-manager? Allow me to know whether Miss Wilton is right or wrong. Her voice is not strong, but it is true to time and tune; and I wish I could say the same for everyone concerned in the piece' (a movement of approval from the orchestra). 'Now, Miss Wilton, you are too much distressed to sing again this morning, so we will miss your duets, and try them again to-morrow; when your part of the music comes, the band shall be more piano, and then you will be heard beautifully. We'll astonish them yet.' The tears rolled down my cheeks, and my heart was too full to speak. My kind friend! how I looked for a smile from him whenever I came upon the stage! When I had to sing, he took up his violin, following and supporting my voice, and helping me on by hiding my shortcomings. His words of comfort and encouragement made me feel safe. I record my champion's name, W. H. Montgomery, with a strong feeling of gratitude. At the night rehearsal I was much applauded by the gentlemen in the orchestra, and kind-hearted little Toole, with a comic chuckle, said, in his own quaint way, 'I don't think poor Bristol will see you again in a hurry.'

At last the opening night arrived; the house was crammed, and when Mr. Dillon as Belphegor, Mrs. Dillon as Madeline his wife, with a little girl in the cart, Toole at the back of it, beating a drum, and I seated like a boy on the horse, came on to the stage, there was a tremendous reception—such cheering, of course for Mr. Dillon; the rest of us being more or less unknown. I had little or nothing to say on my first appearance; but the supper scene which followed went off wonderfully well, Toole making the people scream with laughter, and becoming a great success before he had been many minutes on the stage. At the end of the act, where my best scene occurred with Mr. Dillon, the applause was tremendous, and

there was a great call. I waited, hoping and expecting to be taken before the curtain by Mr. Dillon ; but my friend the stage-manager turned round to me sharply, saying, 'Now then, Miss Wilton, go to your room ; you are not wanted.' I walked slowly away towards the dressing-rooms ; Mr. Dillon came off. I listened.

Another loud call ; he went on again and again, each time alone. I reached my room, where my mother was anxiously waiting to know how I had succeeded, and determined not to let her see how distressed I was, I laughed and said, 'All right, mother ; it has gone beautifully.' 'Were you called before the curtain?' she asked. I was on the point of replying, when the call-boy came running along the corridor, shouting, 'Miss Wilton ! Miss Wilton—make haste ! Mr. Dillon says you must go on before the curtain.' Away I went, almost on wings, in case I should be too late, and heard the welcome sound from the public : 'Miss Wilton ! Miss Wilton !' I went on *alone*—my little figure on that big stage, with no one by my side, and no one's hand to help me. The audience called me a second time, and as I was about to answer it, my dear stage-manager pulled me back, saying, 'That will do ; we shall never get the piece over if this is allowed to go on.' I ran to my room, threw my arms round my mother's neck, and said, 'A great success, mother ; kiss me !' When the play was over, Mr. and Mrs. Dillon patted me on the head approvingly, and said how pleased they were.

As Perdita, I looked very nice, I think, with my hair hanging loosely over my shoulders, a pretty wreath of blush roses, a charming little dress of white cashmere, which my mother made, a bunch of roses at my waist, pale pink silk stockings, *and* the boots ! I had a charming reception when I reappeared, and the audience was kind and encouraging. When I sang with that delightful actress, Mrs. Mellon, who played Florizel, the duet, 'Oh, my heart goes pit-a-pat,' it did indeed go pit-a-pat, for I was acting and singing with one of the greatest favourites on the London stage. The tune, which was charming, soon became very popular on the street-organs. When the piece came to an end I was called again before the curtain, and had flowers enough thrown to me to fill my little green and silver milk-pail : I felt that I had made a success, although some of the ladies told me not to feel too certain about it, as the critics often condemned what an audience had praised. We were all told to be at the theatre on the following morning for some alterations. I was terribly anxious to see the newspapers, but I was afraid, and so went to the theatre without knowing positively what impression I had made. The moment I arrived there the people flocked to congratulate me, seizing my hands, and overpowering me with praise. I looked for the leader of the orchestra, my friend when I most needed one ; I wanted *his* congratulations. He came to me with an armful of newspapers, saying, 'Here, my dear ; take these and be happy.' As soon as I could I ran home.

How my dear mother and myself then read over and over again those criticisms! I could hardly eat anything all day.

The following encouraging words from the *Morning Post*, it may be guessed, were highly valued by me: 'Miss M. Wilton is a young (apparently *very* young) lady quite new to us, but her natural and pathetic acting as Henri, the son of Belphegor, showed her to possess powers of no ordinary character, which fully entitled her to the recalls she obtained at the end of the second act. She appeared also as Perdita, the Royal Milkmaid, and made still further inroads in the favour of the audience; indeed, anything more dangerous to throw in the way of a juvenile prince it were difficult to imagine. She is a charming *débutante*, who hails from Bristol. She sings prettily, acts archly, dances gracefully, and is withal of a most bewitching presence.'

Well, that was my first appearance in London. My dear friend Mr. Toole, who also then acted for the first time at the Lyceum, was exceedingly nervous; but amidst all his anxiety about his own success, he never forgot to say a few cheery words to me. I must here tell a little story to show how he had already learnt the art of playing a joke. He asked me one evening if it were true that my birthday was very near, and when I told him the date he carefully wrote it down. Two or three nights later he said that he had lost the memorandum, but would I tell him again? I did so. The next night he sent word by my dresser that he wished to speak to me. By-and-by he followed me to the door of my room, and said, 'Dear little Marie, you will consider me very stupid, but for the life of me I can't remember that date you gave me; I left the memorandum in my pocket last night, and now I can't find it. Would you mind telling me again?' I replied laughingly, 'Why, it's to-morrow.' 'Good gracious!' he exclaimed, 'how lucky it is that I asked you! good-night.' I remarked to my mother, 'I fancy Mr. Toole is going to give me something very nice for a birthday present; he seems so anxious to be correct about the day.' The next night he knocked at my dressing-room door and asked for me. He said a few kind words, and handed me a parcel carefully sealed up. I at once began to open it; paper wraps, one after another, were torn off, and still I did not get to the end of them. I felt sure that, in his love for a bit of fun, he had placed a small trinket in several folds of paper in order to work me up to the highest pitch of excitement, and then to astonish me with a pretty ornament of some sort. I was beginning to feel weary of unfolding wrap after wrap. At last the end seemed to be approaching. What could it be? The final package was carefully sealed. I paused to speculate on its contents; the parcel was round—perhaps a bracelet; but it yielded to pressure. 'It's something alive!' I dropped it; it rolled. 'I dare not open it; something will jump out.' I stood on a chair, frightened out of my wits, and made my dresser undo the parcel. A dead silence; several more pieces of pink tissue-

paper. Oh, the suspense! It is something wrapped up in wool; it must be a tiny bracelet. I'll please him by wearing it on the stage; only right, of course, that I should, after his kind remembrance of my birthday. What is it? A Tangerine orange! I wanted to laugh, but my tears wouldn't let me; when the terrible feeling of disappointment had passed, I fully enjoyed the joke.

Mr. Toole rarely omits to this day, whenever I visit his theatre, to send me round a package of sweetmeats in remembrance of his first birthday present.

My next part at the Lyceum was 'Serena, the little fairy at the bottom of the sea,' in *Conrad and Medora;* then I had a small part called Lemon-drop in a capital farce written by Edmund Yates. He gave me kindly praise, and said it was a *sweet* performance, although a lemon-drop, and he was sure there was a bright career before me.

I should have been miserable in that theatre but for Mr. Toole and my musical friend, who never failed to help me in my songs and duets. I only made a moderate success in the new burlesque, for I had but little to do, and felt out of it somehow. Soon afterwards *Virginius* was produced, and when it had been played a few nights, Mrs. Dillon, who played Virginia, was taken ill, and I was told that I must take the part. I sat up till a late hour working at it, and got through it tolerably well. Mr. Dillon was very pleased with me, and said, 'You must study parts like this; you have a pretty natural style of acting, and I should like to see you one day play Juliet.' I told him I had played it when I was quite a child; and he replied, 'Oh, those are exhibitions I would rather not witness; I am glad I was not present.' I didn't like this remark at the time, but have often thought since how right he was.

About this time one of the dramatic critics—my impression is that I owed the kindness to my old friend Mr. John Hollingshead, who then wrote in that capacity—remarked upon a trick I had of always using my right arm with a jerk, as if it were hung on hinges, and that I ignored the possession of a left arm at all. I was much teased also about this peculiarity by members of the company, who would give imitations of it, which, if correct, must have been very ungraceful; and I was at my wits' end to know what to do to break myself of it, for I had tried and failed over and over again. One day I took a four-wheeled cab, and just as the man was about to shut the door, in desperation I put my right arm in the way, and so injured it that I was obliged to carry it in a sling for some days; but I cured myself of my bad habit, for the left arm was brought into practice; and by the time the injured limb was well, the ugly jerky action was an eccentricity of the past.

Mr. Webster, who was then lessee of the old Adelphi Theatre, offered me an engagement at a salary of five pounds a week, which I accepted; but, as this was not to commence for three months, it

allowed me to accept another offer for a little time which Mr. Buckstone made me for the Haymarket.

I was not sorry to leave the Lyceum, as I saw little prospect of making progress there; and my friends in the theatre were not numerous. Mr. and Mrs. Dillon were always kind, and I liked them both; but managers cannot be responsible for malice. I was more fortunate at the Haymarket, and met with every consideration and encouragement from the company, one and all. Dear old Mr. Chippendale was the stage-manager, who encouraged and helped me whenever he could. What a change for me!

I made my appearance as Cupid in an extravaganza written by the accomplished and delightful Frank Talfourd, and described by him as 'An Entirely New Classical Love Story, originally suggested by Ovid, under the name, or rather *apple*-ation, of Atalanta, or the three Golden Apples.' I made a decided hit in my part, and was very happy; my share in the music, too, was successful; my voice, I fancy, grew stronger as my heart grew lighter.

Very soon after this, I met my recent foe, the Lyceum stage-manager, at a book-shop in the Strand; he held out his hand to me, and, with a large smile (he was a big man), greeted me with, 'Well, my dear child, you are getting on rapidly, and I congratulate you.' I could not take his hand, but glared at him, and could feel myself getting red with passion. The remembrance of the indignities which he had made me suffer mounted to my face, and I said, 'Sir, you almost broke my heart at a time when I sorely needed help and support; now that I am successful, and beyond your reach, you can offer me your hand in friendship. I refuse to take it.' I put all the dignity into this speech at my command (it was not much). But he only laughed, and answered, 'Oh, my dear little God of Love, don't be severe.' We never met again. I have long ago forgiven, but have not forgotten him.

After this I will leave a subject which is not interesting to the outside world; but were I to relate at length many cruel landmarks in my early career, I should probably be accused of exaggeration; so perhaps it is better to bury them in the past, though the remembrance of them makes me feel, at times, a little bitter, in spite of myself. Had it not been for a dogged determination to work on, and succeed in spite of them, I scarcely know where I should be now. But '*Perseverando*' is the Wilton motto, and although it was almost extinguished in my father's case, it rose from its ashes again in mine.

My engagement at the Haymarket was during some of the brightest days of the old company, and my short stay made me regret that I had not the advantage of acting in the comedies that were played there so perfectly.

Frank Talfourd was a man of very delicate constitution, and was constantly upbraided by his friends for not taking more care of himself. One very bleak cold day he was met in the Strand by his

brother author, Robert Brough, who was so distressed to see that Talfourd was not wrapped up, that he told him in strong terms how wrong it was to himself, and how unkind to his friends. Brough insisted that he must wear thick woollen undervests, and to make sure of his doing so, took him into a neighbouring shop, and asked for some to be shown to them. The man produced samples, some of which were of a light gray colour, others brown. Talfourd ordered some light ones, when the assistant shook his head. 'I should prefer the brown, sir, if I were you.' 'Why?' asked Talfourd; 'are they better made, or of finer material?' 'No, sir,' was the answer; 'they are all equal in quality.' 'Then why do you so strongly recommend the brown ones?' 'Well, sir,' said the man, indicating the gray vests, '*those* will want washing *sometimes*;' then pointing earnestly to the brown vests, he exclaimed, 'but *these*——!' Frank Talfourd loved to tell this story.

A little romance occurred to me early in the run of *Atalanta*, which resulted, I am sorry to say, in a tragic ending. I was pestered by some stupid letters full of nonsensical admiration. Their frequency at last became so annoying, the notes being accompanied by flowers with silly requests that I would wear them, that I consulted Mr. Compton, who was always most kind to me, how best to put a stop to the nuisance. In his quaint way he said, 'Some love-sick boy! but as the letters are addressed to the "Sweetest God of Love in the world," send them on to Buckstone! As for the flowers, give them to me; I'll wear them.' He attached the bouquet to his hat, and strutted about the stage, much to my amusement, dressed as the old Pedagogue, in which he was inimitably droll. In the last scene he placed the little note that was sent with the flowers between the white feather wings which I wore as Cupid; and when I had to draw an arrow from my quiver in the business of the scene, the *billet-doux* fell to the ground, much to my confusion. Compton laughed and said, when the piece was over, 'I don't think our love-sick friend will trouble us any further.' The next night, however, he received a letter, saying, that if he only knew the misery he was causing to a poor harmless fellow, he never would have been guilty of such an unkindness. Compton inquired what sort of man brought the letter. The hall-porter answered, 'Not a man at all, sir—it was a boy.' Upon which Compton said to me, 'This is only a poor little schoolboy, after all; here are some more roses which he has sent, and begs of you to wear. Do so, my dear, to assure him that you are not offended, and the poor little fellow will go back to school rejoicing, and you will be troubled by him no more.' I did wear them, and the moment I went on to the stage there was a sound like a squeak, which came from the front of the house. It startled me, but nothing further occurred for quite two weeks, and I hoped with Compton that my youthful admirer had disappeared. One night, however, after the performance, a most alarming letter arrived, saying that

having once worn the flowers he had sent me, I had proved that the writer could not be altogether indifferent to me; adding, 'I shall be here again to-morrow night, and if you do not then wear the bouquets I shall send you, I shall wait outside the stage-door, and as you pass me in your cab, I shall shoot you dead.' My mother decided to go with me to the theatre the next night. We both consulted Mr. Compton, and he advised us to leave by the front entrance instead of the stage-door, saying that he would have the boy watched, and, if armed, give him in charge. He laughingly added, 'He is a bloodthirsty young ruffian, and his people must be communicated with at once. I little thought such trouble would come of my advice to you to wear the stupid fellow's flowers; but I expect, after a sound thrashing and a threat to put him into prison, he will disappear.' We went out the front way, and arrived home safely. On the next day we were told that no such person had been seen in Suffolk Street, and we began to think the whole affair was a hoax.

Shortly afterwards, however, an elderly lady called at our lodgings and asked if she could see me; my mother and I received her. She looked at me very hard, and said, 'I wish I could spare you the sad story I have to tell. You have lately been much annoyed by receiving letters and flowers from a young man who has constantly been to the Haymarket Theatre.' I replied, 'Yes, I have indeed; but I was under the impression that he was merely a boy.' She continued, 'No, he is twenty-one years of age, and my son. I am a widow, and he is my only child. For some time I have noticed a strangeness in his manner. He would pace up and down his room at night talking to himself, and never seemed to sleep. I became very uneasy, and often asked him what was the matter, but he would never reply. A week ago, while he was out, I went to his room to see if I could find a clue to all this mystery. I saw a letter addressed to you, in which he threatened to do you harm if you did not wear the flowers he intended to send you. The following evening I had him detained at home, and the whole night he was raving. I am almost broken-hearted. I have consulted doctors, and my poor son is pronounced insane. He has promised that if he can hear from your own lips that you can never care for him, he will rest content and never trouble you again. Now, my dear young lady, will you grant him an interview, and in the presence of his doctor let him hear you say you cannot accept his addresses, and I shall be truly grateful.' Then turning to my mother, she said, 'I appeal to you as a mother. I am worn out with anxiety. I implore you to help me in this matter.' My mother replied, 'Of course, if we can be assured that this painful business will end here, I will consent.'

The poor lady seemed quite grateful, and after fixing a day and hour for the interview she left.

The day arrived, and at the appointed time came a loud knock.

Presently the room door was opened, and in walked the poor lady, then a gentleman who, I was informed, was a 'mad' doctor, followed by a pale, fair-haired young man, with a very freckled face, and odd, light-blue eyes, which he fixed on me the moment he entered the room, and never took them away until he left the house. After him came a strange-looking man, who I distinctly remember had lost a thumb, and who was told by the doctor to sit outside the room until he was wanted. It would be very difficult for me to describe my feelings and my mother's looks; I only know that I was terribly frightened.

After a short, painful interval, the doctor spoke. 'Miss Wilton, you have for some few weeks received letters and bouquets from Mr. ——?' 'Yes.' 'You were requested in these notes to wear the flowers during the evening?' 'Yes.' 'Well, one evening you did wear them?' 'Yes; because a very touching letter was written to request me to do so to show that I was not offended with the sender, and that then he would never trouble me again.' The doctor went on: 'After that you received a threatening letter from him.' 'Yes; and it alarmed me very much.' I related the details, when the poor fellow muttered, 'I could not injure that which I loved!' My mother urged that the interview must come to an end, and the doctor then said, 'Well, Miss Wilton, you are aware that Mr. —— has promised that if he can hear from your own lips that you cannot care for him, he will never trouble you more. He will keep his word, I know. All you have to do is to answer that question, and then we will leave you, asking you to forgive us for this intrusion; and pray believe that I am extremely sorry you should have suffered so much annoyance.'

I paused for a second; I looked at the young man's anxious but extremely plain face, and saw his eyes still fixed upon me with a look of intense sorrow and suffering. I then said, 'I can never care for this gentleman, and I ask him to trouble me no further.' The doctor turned to him and said, 'You hear?' There was then a general movement. The poor fellow came up to me, looked at me with a wild stare, and said, 'Good-bye.' He turned round, walked to the door, over which hung my portrait, gave a sort of stifled scream, exactly like the squeak I had heard in the theatre, rushed hurriedly from the room and past the man outside, who immediately ran after him as fast as his legs would take him. My mad admirer went so quickly that he pushed against the servant who was going to open the street-door for them, sent her sprawling on the floor, and ran towards Waterloo Bridge, with the man after him, the doctor after the man, and the poor old lady after the doctor. The scene I shall never forget. The carriage they came in followed, so they made altogether a very extraordinary procession. Some short time after we heard from Mrs. —— that her son had been placed in an asylum. After another lapse of time we heard again that, as he was pronounced much better, he had been sent for a

voyage to Australia with an attendant ; and a few months later we were much startled and pained to hear that during the voyage he had, while his attendant was occupied for a moment in speaking to another passenger, jumped overboard and was drowned. We were all very sorry to hear such sad news of the poor fellow, for we could not help feeling interested in him. It appeared that there had been insanity in his family, and I often wondered whether his inherent madness or *my beauty* (!) was the cause of this sad episode. After a little consideration, and several references to my looking-glass, I concluded that it must have been the former.

I regretfully left the Haymarket, where I had been so happy ; and I regretted it all the more when I found that I had little or nothing to do at the Adelphi. Parts were given to me utterly unsuited to me, and those only of a few lines. There were, of course, many established favourites of the public in the company. Webster —a host in himself—Wright and Paul Bedford, Madame Celeste (whom I had not met since I acted the child in the *Green Bushes* with her in a country theatre) and Mary Keeley, who inherited a share of her mother's genius, are the principal names I can recall. I had little else to do than stand at the wings and watch them, wishing that I were playing all the good parts !

Wright and Paul Bedford were always closely associated in pieces written especially to bring them together, in which Wright never missed an opportunity of introducing some fresh joke at Paul's expense, or at anyone else's. Poor Paul ! He was a genial, good-tempered, kindly creature, and loved by everyone. I can see his round, red, merry face now, with his twinkling eyes, peering through the green-room doorway with his usual greeting, 'Good-morning, boys and girls ! How-de-doo ! how-de-do-o-o ?' I once was one of a party who paid a visit to Wright at his model farm near Surbiton, which was the most complete and interesting thing of the kind I ever saw, and I remember how he imposed on my over-credulous nature by telling me, with a serious face, that all his guinea-pigs had, during the previous night, eaten off their own tails !

I was in despair of ever getting anything to do which would advance me in my profession, and implored Mr. Webster to release me from my engagement ; but, although he was always kind, he insisted on keeping me to it, saying that my opportunity would come if I would only be patient.

I remember an extravaganza in which I played there, called *Cupid and Psyche*. I was again cast for Cupid, and, during the run of the piece, I fell seriously ill from severe congestion of the lungs, caused by standing in draughts under the stage while waiting for my cue to rise through trap-doors. I felt that I had played Cupid so often as to wonder whether I was doomed to pass my professional life in appearing from unexpected and impossible places. My illness was serious, and I was obliged to resign my part for

some time ; no trivial matter for me, for, in those days, salaries ceased to be paid from the hour the manager was deprived of an actor's services.

Doubtless had my mind been less burdened by the terror of earning nothing, I should have recovered more quickly. One day when I had been given up by our doctor, and was lying in bed wondering what my poor mother would do without me, I opened my eyes and saw her weary face. She looked so lonely that a feeling came over me that I *must* get well. I fought against the doctor's verdict and against the moanings of the servant—a kind of moaning which is peculiar to the race, combined with the most ghastly forebodings. The maid who helped to attend me was a good creature, but seemed to feed on the horrors of the situation. She whispered in my ear, when she thought that it would all soon be over, 'May I cut off a lock of your 'air, miss, as a keepsake?' I was too weak to laugh or feel horrified ; but it helped to give me more strength of will. At last, after a weary time, I grew strong enough to act again. I had been ordered first to the seaside to get back some health, but the chronic state of our finances would not permit the luxury.

Soon after my return to the Adelphi, an incident occurred which, I think, will be worth relating. During a rehearsal of one of my very small parts, a note was handed to me. Without looking at the superscription, I opened it and read the following : 'Mary, before it is too late, repent of your rash conduct and return to your heart-broken father and mother.' Naturally astonished at this strange request, only having left home an hour before, I handed the note to Mr. Webster, who knew my parents, and asked him to read it. He laughed and said, 'There must be some mistake. Shall I go and see what it means?' I replied, 'Do, Mr. Webster, please. I can't understand it ; I must be mistaken for someone else.'

I went on with my rehearsal, and, after being absent for some little time, Mr. Webster returned, and said laughingly, 'Well, my dear, I've had a most extraordinary interview. It appears that there is some girl who has left her home and parents in Wolverhampton, and has come up to London, where her friends are searching for her everywhere. Last night, an uncle of the girl's happened to be in the pit of this theatre, and when he saw you come on the stage he said, "There she is ! I've found her at last." The man waited, it appears, until the performance was over, and then came round to the stage-door, but as you had finished early in the piece, you had gone home. He was told this by the hall-porter, upon which he asked where you lived, which, of course, he was not told. He seemed annoyed at this refusal, said he would call again in the morning, and here he is. You had better come down with me and satisfy the man of his blunder.'

I went down, and there was a man whom I had never, to my

knowledge, seen in my life. He came towards me and said abruptly 'I have got you at last. You will please make your arrangements to come home to Wolverhampton at once; I have been a long time looking for you, and now I've got you, I don't intend to let you slip again. How you will ever be able to look your parents in the face again, I don't know.' The mystery became thicker and thicker. The more I tried to convince the man of his error, the more determined he appeared to be to take me to my 'distressed parents.' All my efforts were useless, and the stranger was so earnest in his appeal to my proper sense of feeling to give my parents no more unhappiness, but to return to them, and try, by my future conduct, to soothe their old age and heal the wound which I had so cruelly made in their hearts, that the hall-porter, overcome by the touching words, at last cried out, 'For goodness' sake, miss, go 'ome to your friends. What's all the applause you git every night compared with the 'appiness you will feel when you know you've done your *dooty?* There's nothing so 'orrible as a undutiful and ungrateful choild.' I could hardly refrain from laughing, in spite of the unpleasant nature of the interview.

Mr. Webster then told the man who I was, and how long I had been in London; that I came from Bristol, and that he had known my family for years. The poor man looked mystified, and it was arranged that I should go through my work at the theatre that night, that he would telegraph to my 'distressed parents' to come up themselves from Wolverhampton. I could only hope that something in the interim might transpire to help us. The stranger trusted to Mr. Webster's promise that we would do nothing until he called again on the following day; when, instead of appearing himself, came the joyful news that the man who so insisted on being 'my uncle' had received a letter from the father of the girl, telling him she had returned home, and asking him to go down at once to Wolverhampton. The man was most humble in his apologies. He could never forgive himself, he said, for the annoyance he had caused, and begged the 'good gentleman' (Mr. Webster) to excuse him to the young lady to whom he had been so rude, vowing that such a likeness he had never seen. The hall-porter laughed when he heard the sequel to this little drama, and said, 'I knowed he was either mad or drunk; *I* never believed in him.' How clever he was, that hall-porter! No more of my double was heard, and the incident, which seemed only trifling, soon passed from my thoughts; but later in my life I have sometimes wondered if this evidently strange resemblance had any connection with an even stranger episode to be related further on in this book.

The season was drawing to a close, and, alas! I was only just where I began. I was ambitious to make a position in which I could command a good salary and be somebody besides, for I was getting weary of being little more than nobody, when Fortune,

who has ever been my good friend, came to my help. It was decided to pull the old Adelphi down, and build what was the foundation of the present handsome theatre in its place ; this set me free, and I signed an engagement with Miss Swanborough to appear shortly under her management at the Strand Theatre. An offer also came from my dear old Bristol manager, to go there for a fortnight to play Cupid. Cupid again ! My friends had begun to tease me about playing so many Cupids, declaring that I must have been born with wings, and could do nothing else. I gladly accepted Mr. Chute's offer, and went down to Bristol ; and delighted I was to see all my old friends there again.

The most important episode of a romance in my life (which I once told in the Christmas number of a magazine) occurred at Bristol ; and this visit to the old city strongly revived my remembrance of it, although the sequel, which I will relate here, did not really happen until later on, when I was acting at the Strand Theatre. Attractions must have been at a very low ebb, when the manager of a small country theatre where I was acting soon after I left Manchester conceived the idea of my playing Juliet. I am thankful that such things never occur now. The manager explained to the public that the Italian Juliet was but little older than I, and that in southern climes girls were marriageable at a very early age.

I was a pale, thin, delicate-looking child, and tall for my age. Everyone thought at that time that I should, if I lived, be a remarkably fine woman ; but since playing Juliet on that memorable first occasion I have not grown an inch, and sometimes think that my tragic efforts gave as great a shock to my system as to my audience.

Often on my way to and from our rehearsals, when I had time to loiter, I stopped at a window in the little High Street, and longingly looked at a necklace of pearl beads, marked five shillings—a fortune to me then. I saved until I had half a crown, and then tried to induce the shopman to let me have it for that price ; but I failed. My father promised to buy me the treasure if I would be very good, and study Juliet. How readily I said, 'Yes ;' for the labour of learning the words, and being taught by my mother how to speak them, seemed light indeed, compared with the joy of possessing those little pearl beads.

The night arrived for the 'great dramatic event' (*vide* advertisements). My mother could scarcely dress me, her hands trembled so. I could not help wondering why she should be so anxious. I was not. I was of that happy age that knows no responsibility. I had on a pretty white dress, trimmed with narrow silver lace, my hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders ; and best adornment of all was my beautiful pearl necklace. Oh ! how everyone would envy me those beads !

All went well until the fourth act, when, in throwing my head

back to drink the poison, my long train, which I wore for the first time in my life, and which had been a great anxiety to me all through the play, got entangled in my feet ; and, in the effort to save myself from falling, my necklace gave way, and the beads were scattered about in all directions. I looked scared for a moment ; but when I fully realized that it was broken, I fell to crying so bitterly that I thought my heart would break too. I sank on to the couch, sobbing piteously. The audience thought this a good piece of acting, and gave me great applause.

In the greatest grief, and with stifled sobs, I went through the last act. When I fell on Romeo's body there was great applause ; but in the middle of Friar Laurence's last speech, I saw some of my beads lying close to his feet. His treading upon them seemed imminent ; so, forgetting that I was supposed to be dead, I got up and rescued them, and then lay down again. Of course, the rest of Friar Laurence's speech was not heard, and the curtain fell amidst loud laughter. I had a good scolding from father, mother, and manager, who hoped that if I ever again played Juliet I should think more of the part than of the ornaments.

As we were leaving the theatre, my eyes swollen from crying over the injured necklace, a gentleman who had witnessed the performance and the scene stepped up to us, and said, 'I hope you will pardon me for speaking to you ; my name is Captain ——. Let me tell you how much I have been impressed by your little daughter's acting as Juliet ; it really was, for one so young, very remarkable. Take care of her, sir ; there is a bright career before her. Good-night. Good-night, little one !' He shook my hand, and asked me if I would give him the remnant of my broken necklace, which I had so carefully rescued from destruction. I trembled at the thought of parting with it ; but my mother whispered to me, 'I am going to buy you another.' So I gave it. On our way home we talked of nothing else—my father dwelling on the criticism, and I on the final disappearance of my necklace.

For many and many a night I quite looked for my 'prophet ;' but he had gone as mysteriously as he came. Often on our way home had I said, 'We have never seen that kind gentleman since ; I seem to miss him somehow. Will his words ever come true, I wonder ?'

Some time after, at Bristol, and as I was leaving the theatre with my mother, who should step up to us but my 'prophet.' We both recognised him at once. I was delighted ; but my mother feared that his admiration of me as a child *might* grow into something more serious, and she therefore did not receive him with that warmth she otherwise might have done. He said, 'Well, little one, you see I was right ; you are going up the ladder step by step. Mark my words, the next one will be London.'

My heart jumped at the sight of this man ; there was a kind of mystery about him. He seemed to be mixed up with my life some-

how; and whatever part of importance I played, I always thought of him and of his kind words. He showed me the string of pearls, and said, 'You see how I have treasured these. I don't intend to part with them. I shall never give them back to you unless you ask me for them.' How different were my feelings for those pearls now! It seemed like taking away my heart when he first asked me for them; and now, unknown to myself, he *had* taken it away.

Every night during his short stay he sat in a corner of the dress-circle, and at the end of the play would show me the pearl beads. He would wait sometimes outside the stage-door, just to press my hand, and say, 'Good-night, little one.' He had not time to say more; for my mother used to sit at the window of our lodgings, which were opposite, to see me come home.

I was now in love for the very first time in my life. How everything else in the whole world suddenly dwindled into nothing! Father, mother, sisters, theatres, acting—all seemed to be shut out by a curtain, and only one being was in view. There was nothing in this man to attract a girl of my age. He was not young, not what is called good-looking, and was poor; but what was this to me? All the nicest people were poor, and I didn't care. But I had never had an opportunity of telling him all this, for my mother had declined to encourage his visits; and so he kept away, and never tried to see me, except for one moment to say, 'Good-night.'

One night I received a note from him, saying, 'Good-bye. I wonder if we shall ever meet again. I shall never part with your pearls. I love you, little one. I wish you loved me; but it is better for you that you should not.' This was the first opportunity he had ever given me of telling him how much I loved him, and I was resolved to take it.

I gave the note to my mother, and implored her to let me see him. She refused, saying I was a silly girl. I fancy she said a fool; but I was too agitated to remember.

'How can you think seriously of such a mysterious person?' Mysterious! she would not give him a chance of being anything else. 'Surely,' she continued, 'you cannot wish to destroy all your professional prospects! Let me hear no more of this nonsense! Thank goodness he is gone, and you will forget him in a few days.'

'Forget him! and in a few days! Oh, mother!' I knew his address in Ireland; and, after vainly trying to follow my mother's counsel, I wrote to him, saying that I loved him more than anything else in the world, and that if he really cared for me as much, I would run away, and go to him; that if I did not marry him, I would marry no one else; that I could not study; that I could do nothing but think of him. He replied that it seemed hard to take me from a profession in which I was destined to shine; that he

should for ever reproach himself if I regretted, when too late, the step I had taken ; that his love and empty pockets would be but a miserable return for the sacrifice I should make. He begged me to reflect. I did ; and the more I reflected, the more determined I became, and I told him so. He answered that he would not fight with his feelings any longer ; that he was sure, when once we were married, my mother would soon forgive us.

And so it came about that I was to start on a certain day. All was settled. I was to receive the final letter with instructions, and the money for my journey. I thought the day would never come. Time seemed to creep, and not to fly. But as the day drew nearer and nearer, my heart, which had been so light and joyful, began to beat with a heavier thud. There was a kind of fear—a wish to run away from myself ; for I felt afraid of myself—my head and my heart began to argue.

On the night before I was to leave my home, I returned from my work at the theatre. I found my mother waiting supper for me as usual. I could not eat ; I was nervous and thoughtful. My mother asked me if I was ill ; or had I been annoyed at the theatre? I shook my head. I could not trust myself to speak. When she kissed me, and said, 'Good-night ; God bless you !' I whispered to myself, 'Will He bless me to-morrow?' The words fell from her lips like a reproach ; for although she said them to me every night, they never seemed to mean so much before—they never set me thinking as they did that night.

When I was alone in my little bedroom, I fell on my knees, and prayed to God to help me and to guide me, for my heart was full of doubt. I felt how I was deceiving my dear mother, to whom I owed everything—who had taught me, who had worked with me, and who was now dependent upon me. If I went away, what would become of her and my young sisters? How I wept and prayed that night ! I implored God to help me in my trouble, and to give me some warning in my dreams. I cried myself to sleep, but awoke several times. I heard the church-bell toll four, six, and eight. Still no warning dream. I tried to think that perhaps my going would be for the best, or I should have surely dreamt something ; and I felt a little happier as I lay thinking. Half-past eight was the post-time, and I had told the servant to bring any letters there might be for me to my room.

The half-hour struck. I heard the postman's knock. My heart seemed to stop beating. I heard the girl on the stairs. I could scarcely breathe. A knock at the door. This was the final letter. I jumped out of bed, and as I crossed the room to open the door, a voice, as if in great haste, said quickly, 'Don't go.'

God alone knows what my feelings were at that moment. Never, never, to my dying day, shall I forget it. A thrill, first of awe and terror, then of thankfulness, came over me. I fell on my knees, and said, 'I won't go.' The servant impatiently pushed the letter

under the door. I opened it. There were the final instructions—how he would meet me on the journey, and the money for my expenses. I threw on my dressing-gown, sat down, and wrote these words: 'Don't expect me, I cannot go. I have changed my mind.' I enclosed the money, and sent the letter to the post. I gave a sigh of relief, lay down on the bed, and cried bitterly.

One morning, during breakfast, a few weeks later, my mother (who up to this time knew nothing of my little story) handed me the newspaper, and with a smile of satisfaction pointed to the marriage column. He had married! I threw my arms around my mother's neck, had a good cry, and told her everything.

The words of my 'prophet' were fulfilled; I was acting in a London theatre. Whenever I made a success, I thought of his kind words, and remembered how I had grown to love him at last.

One day I was walking slowly up Regent Street, when I stopped, without knowing why, at the Carrara-marble works. Serious thoughts came over me as I contemplated the head-stones and monuments, and as I turned from them with a sigh, a voice by my side said, in a low tone, 'Well, my faithless little one?' I turned, and saw my 'prophet.' My first instinct was to run away, but my legs would not move.

'You see,' he said, 'what came of your suddenly changing your mind. I revenged myself and got married. How cruel you were!' He told me that he had married a rich woman who had been a widow just a year, within a month from my refusal. After thinking to myself that widows lost no time in settling their affairs, I told him the story of my warning, and he seemed much impressed by it. He answered, 'It was, I am sure, a timely warning, for we should have been very poor. It would have been a dreary life for you, and much too big a sacrifice, with all your bright prospects. I am now a widower, with one little child. My wife died a year after our marriage. I am rich now, and can return to my old young love. I wonder if my little Juliet loves me still?' Yes, I did; but I was afraid to hope again, so I said, 'You had better not see me any more; you will soon forget me.' He replied, 'Never, until I am under one of these,' pointing to the headstones in the window. A cold chill ran through me as he said those words.

He was under orders to sail for India the following week, so no time was to be lost. He called on my mother, and asked her consent to our corresponding and to our marrying on his return to England, which would be in a year, providing she consented. My mother hesitated, but after tears and entreaties from me, and with the hope that he would marry a black woman, or that I should forget him, or that something would happen to keep him in India, she reluctantly consented. The fates seemed to will it this time, and so I was happy again.

The day came to say good-bye. He showed me the pearl neck-

lace, saying, 'You see how I have guarded it. I will never part with it ; it seems to have linked our two lives together.' I looked at the broken beads, and all the old times came back to me. There was my necklace just as I had left it, and the knot which I had made to prevent the other beads from falling off.

I somehow wished there had been no broken link, for I had begun to feel rather superstitious now about our courtship.

Every mail brought me a letter. No one ever seemed to speak such words as he did, they were so good and honest. I always felt that I could trust him, and that is why I loved him.

Six months passed, and every mail had brought me my letter. How anxiously I looked for his handwriting. At last the day came again, but no letter ; the next mail arrived, and the next, but still no letter. What could it mean ? My mother, smiling, said, 'Ah, my child ! the old, old story ; and I am not sorry.' After a few days' reflection, I began to think that she was right, and that I had been a fool ; but I was very unhappy. He had seemed to be my guiding star ever since I was a little girl, and all my first and purest love was his. Oh, it was dreadful to bear !

One day, very shortly after his third letter was due, I was again in Regent Street, and thought of the day I had met him there. I was sad and miserable, but still could not help clinging to the hope of seeing him again, and that all would be explained. Perhaps he was coming home to surprise me. As I approached the Carrara-marble works, I hurried to the place, with a kind of superstitious feeling—having met him there so strangely before, I should perhaps as strangely meet him there again. I stopped at the old spot, waited, looked about—no, not there ! Ah ! I remember I was looking in at the window when he came ; I will do so again. And there I saw a large white headstone, with these words :

Sacred to the Memory of

CAPTAIN ——,

WHO DIED SUDDENLY, AT KURRACHEE,

ETC., ETC.

How I got home, I know not. I found my mother in tears, reading a letter which she had received from his dearest friend, who had found my letters among his papers. He had died soon after writing to me for the last time, and my little pearl necklace was buried with him.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE STRAND THEATRE.

Burlesque—Pippo in the *Maid and the Magpie*—Remonstrances—H. J. Byron—A success—Charles Dickens's opinion—Death of 'Papa Bland'—Actresses who have acted successfully in burlesque—Desire to play comedy, but always a burlesque boy—*Kenilworth*—*William Tell*—James Rogers—His tricks with Clarke—Ferdinand Wallerstein—The *Miller and his Men*—The Dowager Countess of Harrington (Miss Foote)—Miss Swanborough's marriage and retirement—*Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp*—A bald-headed friend: 'Bravo, Clarke!'—*Esmeralda*—*Court Favour*—*Miss Eily O'Connor*—Again cast for Karl in the *Miller and his Men*—An engagement forfeited—The St. James's Theatre—My salary: a subterfuge—The *Heart of Midlothian*—Death of Rogers—At the Adelphi: the *Little Treasure*—Bob Romer—Return to the Strand for *Orpheus and Eurydice*—Shakespearean Tercentenary—Juliet—A visit to Liverpool: first meeting with Mr. Bancroft—A reminiscence, with results.

My acceptance of Miss Swanborough's offer was an important step in my early London career, as from its commencement until I became a manager I was chiefly associated with the Strand Theatre, and, for a long time, with a line of characters—'burlesque boys'—which, in the words of the immortal Mr. Eccles, 'was none o' my choosing.' My circumstances, however, would not permit me to pick and choose, and I was thankful for occupation which gave me the means towards supporting our home. Miss Swanborough, who had held a leading comedy position at the Haymarket, was a charming woman, and never failed in her endeavours to make the members of her company happy: to her reign of management I always look back with bright recollections. When I received the part of Pippo in the *Maid and the Magpie*, I was disappointed at its being another boy, and wrote to ask if any change could be made in the cast. Miss Swanborough kindly arranged for me to meet her as well as Mr. Byron, whose acquaintance I thus made for the first time. He was then quite a young man, with a marked inheritance of the beauty of his great ancestor. He said he had written the part of Pippo expressly for me, and that he was distressed I did not like it. I explained that I did not wish to play burlesque boys, and that I objected to the part on that account. Miss Swanborough seemed to be perplexed and anxious, and Mr. Byron remarked that he was a young author, and my not acting Pippo would mean a serious loss to him, that there was no one else in the theatre to whom he could entrust it, and that he could 'see me in every line of it.' He added, 'I am only a beginner, you know, and this burlesque may make or mar me.' This appeal decided me; I could hold out no longer, so promised to play Pippo.

The original cast of this burlesque included Miss Maria Ternan (a very refined actress, who, a few years later, married and left the stage); Miss Oliver, already one of London's favourites, having won her laurels under Madame Vestris at the Lyceum; that splendid actress of 'old women' Mrs. Selby, as those will say whose memories will allow them to recall the *Last of the Pigtails;* Mr. James Bland, or 'Papa Bland' as he was called in the theatre, who had been so long associated with Planché's extravaganzas at the Lyceum, and had played burlesque monarchs in so many of them, that he was named 'The king of burlesque;' and Mr. John Clarke, or, more familiarly, 'Little' Clarke.

The piece proved an immense success, and as Pippo I established myself as a leading favourite in the theatre. Although not a classical boy, as Cupid was, he was still saucy and amusing, and the people loved to come to see him night after night.

Mr. Byron wrote a duet for Mr. Clarke and myself, at the end of which came a dance. It was quaint and strange, nothing very extraordinary; but it was a novel thing at that time to introduce a dance after a song or duet, and this one became the rage, as well as the *pièce de résistance* of all the hurdy-gurdies and barrel-organs of the day. Encore followed encore every night, and from that time till now no singing has been complete in a burlesque without a dance to follow.

It was not until some time later—indeed, when Forster's life of the great writer came out—that I knew the opinion Charles Dickens years before had written of this performance in a letter to John Forster, in these words: 'I escaped at half-past seven, and went to the Strand Theatre, having taken a stall beforehand, for it is always crammed. I really wish you would go, between this and next Thursday, to see the *Maid and the Magpie* burlesque there. There is the strangest thing in it that ever I have seen on the stage—the boy Pippo, by Miss Wilton. While it is astonishingly impudent (must be, or it couldn't be done at all), it is so stupendously like a boy, and unlike a woman, that it is perfectly free from offence. I never have seen such a thing. She does an imitation of the dancing of the Christy Minstrels—wonderfully clever—which, in the audacity of its thorough-going, is surprising. A thing that you *cannot* imagine a woman's doing at all; and yet the manner, the appearance, the levity, impulse and spirits of it, are so exactly like a boy, that you cannot think of anything like her sex in association with it. It begins at eight, and is over by a quarter past nine. I never have seen such a curious thing, and the girl's talent is unchallengeable. I call her the cleverest girl I have ever seen on the stage in my time, and the most singularly original.'

A circumstance comes to my mind concerning the *Maid and the Magpie*—tragic at the beginning and comic at the end—which, although it happened during its revival later on, had perhaps be better told here.

'Papa' Bland had long been known as an able actor, but when he played Fernando Villabella he was old and ailing; his memory also grew treacherous, and he became uncertain in the words he had to speak. One night, on arriving at the theatre at his usual time, he was observed to be very ill, and to stagger after getting out of his cab. He was led into the porter's hall, and within half an hour he was dead. His sad end cast a gloom over us all, for we were fond of the kindly old gentleman. There was no one prepared to take the part of Fernando, and what was done that evening I can't remember; but Mr. Byron generously came to the rescue and played the part himself the next night, when he introduced a couplet in the scene with his daughter, played by Miss Oliver, whose name, it must be remembered, was *Martha*, although by her intimate friends she was always called *Patty*.

The burlesque had been such a success, and was so popular, that it seemed to us as if the audience, night after night, had never moved from their seats, so many faces were familiar. It will be understood by this that many frequenters of the old Strand were acquainted with every word of the piece, and whenever a sentence was introduced or forgotten, detected it immediately. On this particular night, when Mr. Byron appeared as Fernando, he added the following lines in the scene with Miss Oliver, where, as her long-lost father, he is trying to bring himself back to her recollection:

> 'Jujubes, oranges, and cakes, I too did give her,
> *Pâté de foie gras*, which means *Patty O'liver!*'

I shall never forget the laughter and chorus of 'Oh's!' that followed these lines. Neither Mr. Byron nor Miss Oliver could proceed for some time; the latter was so taken by surprise that she could hardly finish the scene.

Before I tell what else I have to say about the old Strand days, let me recall some names of prominent actresses in comedy and drama, all of whom have, at some time in their career, acted with success in burlesque, and it may be that this sometimes abused side of stage-life has its power and value in the shape of training. Since those days, however, although burlesque may not have fallen off, certainly some of the dresses have; many of which might be described as beginning too late and ending too soon. Without searching deeply, I remember at once the names of Miss Herbert, Kate and Ellen Terry, Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal), Miss Cavendish, Miss Fanny Josephs, Miss Hodson, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Mellon, Mrs. Charles Matthews, adding, if I may, my own. While among our foreign friends I can at least mention Modjeska and Jane Hading. I have also seen our present most gifted burlesque actress, Miss Farren, act so ably and perfectly in other characters, as to cause regret that she does not give us more frequent opportunities of seeing her genuine comedy power. These

are names of my contemporaries ; were I to go further back, how powerfully the list might be increased !

I shall not weary the reader with a long account of all the boy-parts I played ; but, as I run through the list of them, I will rather pause, when I can, to say something of somebody else.

Season after season I found myself still a boy. When I was talking with my mother one day on the subject, and wishing that I might appear as myself now and then, I exclaimed, 'Oh, dear me ! Why can't I be allowed to be a girl ? It's all very well to be a great favourite with the public, and to be told that I am so natural and real in a boy's dress. Well, if so, why was I not born a boy ?' My mother laughed, and bade me make the best of it.

Now and then I had a part in a comedietta given to me, and I was so successful in it that I pined more and more for that class of character. I frequently urged Mr. Byron to write a comedy and give me a part in it ; he promised that if I would wait awhile he would do so. I did not object to burlesque itself, especially when he wrote it—so witty, clever, and bright ; but my training and ambition had pointed to a different class of acting, and I was frightened that if I did not continue to struggle for it I should never get my chance. If I could have been sometimes cast for girls I should have grown more patient ; but those Cupids had made authors think, and, perhaps, the public believe, I could not play anything but boys. I must not, however, weary my reader, as I fear I often did my manager, with my grumblings.

The next 'boy' was Sir Walter Raleigh in *Kenilworth*, in which, I remember, Miss Swanborough played Leicester for a time, and that wonderfully clever actress, Charlotte Saunders, was cast for Tresillian. She was, indeed, brimful of talent. Had she been tall, and gifted with a stronger voice, she might have been a leading actress in comedy and drama ; but her figure was very short and stout, and the voice thin. There was in her acting a rich, sly humour, and a deep appreciation of the good things she had to say, which was very infectious. I had a great admiration for her as an actress, and a sincere regard for her as a woman.

Mrs. Selby was our 'Good Queen Bess,' who made her first entrance on board a 'penny steamer.' Being a very tall, stout woman, as she stood on the paddle-box, looking bigger than the steamer, she caused great laughter ; when she prepared to land, after the words 'Ease her,' 'Back her,' 'Stop her,' I, as Sir Walter Raleigh, took off my cloak and (repeating history) placed it on the ground for the Queen to stand upon. My part was by no means a long one, but I had some good things to say like the following :

> 'Because, your Majesty, should I e'er wish to pawn it,
> I'll tell my uncle I've had a *sovereign on* [*awn*] *it !*'

One night, during the run of *Kenilworth*, an unfortunate *contre-temps* occurred. When Mrs. Selby appeared, a large wreath of

immortelles was thrown to her by some giddy fellows from a private box. The poor lady was so upset and affected that she fainted, and it was with difficulty she managed to get through the performance. The circumstance caused a disturbance, and the offenders, who in a tipsy frolic had so forgotten themselves, were obliged to leave the theatre. The next day they had an interview with Mr. Charles Selby, when they made a humble apology, which, I believe, was published. Mrs. Selby never quite recovered from what was at the time a severe shock to her system. She had passed a great part of her life in France, and having become imbued with superstition, could never be persuaded that the immortelles did not come as a warning of her approaching death ; her fears, however, were groundless, for she lived some years after the occurrence, and became manager of the Royalty Theatre, where she produced Mr. Burnand's celebrated burlesque, *Ixion*.

John Clarke's name comes at once to my memory, not only as an old friend, but as an admirable actor, who, like myself, pined for other than burlesque parts, and lived to prove the justice of his aspirations.

Next came Albert in *William Tell*, for which, I think, that inimitable comedian James Rogers (it seems so strange to call him so, for he was never known by his playmates but as 'Jimmy,' and I must beg the reader to forgive my using that familiar name) rejoined the company, for it is the first remembrance I have of the amusing scenes that happened between himself and John Clarke. Although they were good friends, poor little Clarke could not help feeling a pang of jealousy whenever he found that his part did not seem to go so well as Jimmy's. On one of these occasions, when Rogers had had the lion's share of laughter, Clarke was heard to groan and mutter in an undertone throughout the evening. Someone who knew the cause remarked, 'Never mind, the audience may to-morrow night be entirely with you ; it often happens so, you know ;' to which he replied, 'It isn't jealousy, there's room enough for both of us ; but it does seem hard that when I have got a good thing to say, I find it received only tolerably well, when if Jimmy exclaims "How are you?" or "Good-bye for the present," the audience is convulsed. I can't understand it.' Poor little Clarke ! He did not see that it was not the words, but the way Jimmy delivered them. Clarke was a great favourite ; but his heavy voice and manner were altogether different from Jimmy's, whose voice was light and thin. Clarke had a slow and ponderous way of speaking, with a kind of gruff drawl, while his rival's delivery was rapid and comically jerky. They differed, too, in features : Clarke's face was long, with a large nose, while Rogers had a small, round face, with a decided *nez rétroussé*. Clarke had complained more than once that Rogers had always longer and better parts to act than he, so when the burlesque of *William Tell* was read to the company, it transpired that Clarke's part of Gesler was undoubtedly

the better of the two. It was amusing to watch his face during the reading, and his delight at having much to say and do, and Rogers very little. Rogers was perfectly still, listened attentively, looking on the ground, and, when the reading was over, he said nothing, but went home.

One night, during the full-dress rehearsal of *William Tell*, we came to a scene in which Clarke and Jimmy had a duet. Clarke's voice was harsh, and often got painfully flat, especially when he had to dwell on a particular note. Rogers, on the contrary, sang in tune, and true. Clarke insisted that the key was different.

Mr. Ferdinand Wallerstein, the conductor of the orchestra, an old and dear friend of mine, assured him to the contrary, and they tried it over so often that everybody grew weary of waiting; Mr. Wallerstein exclaimed that 'The key had not been changed (he ought to know), and he could not be kept there all night; that the voice was always at higher pitch at night,' etc. Clarke, whose ear was very defective, still declared the key was *not* the same; Rogers kept perfectly silent, singing the duet over and over again, without showing the smallest sign of impatience or irritation. At last Clarke shouted in great anger, 'It's a conspiracy! You've changed the key amongst you to oblige Mr. Rogers.' Upon which Rogers remarked in the most quiet, placid manner, 'It's all right—dear boy—same key—only—you're not so well to-night.' Of course Clarke was furious, while Jimmy remained provokingly quiet, without the sign of a smile upon his face.

The night for production arrived. Clarke was full of excitement, and said to me, 'This is a great opportunity for me, and Jimmy (who was playing the small part of Sarnem) will not in *this* piece have it all his own way.' When they met in the green-room Clarke was a little uneasy at the comic appearance of Jimmy, who was dressed in black from top to toe, his wig and brows of the deadliest hue, but his face of an unearthly white. Clarke remarked, 'Oh, of course the audience will be in fits at his appearance, but *that* won't last all night.'

Everything began to Clarke's complete delight, for his part was going splendidly, and he never acted better. At last Jimmy's cue came to enter. He had a splendid reception, of course; Clarke was prepared for that; but after the applause which greeted Jimmy was over, there still was heard a titter all over the house, which continued through Clarke's speeches. He was at first under the impression that his own acting was the cause; but on turning round he saw that Jimmy had on a most extraordinary garment, which took the place of a shoulder-cape. It was only half a yard in width, of jet-black, and began at the back of his neck; but the length of it no one ever knew, for it was never quite on the stage, and never quite off. It was always in somebody's way, and we were constantly obliged to step over this never-ending, long, narrow, garter-like train, which seemed to be everywhere; and when one or the other

of us *did* happen to stand on it unconsciously, he would remark, in his quiet, sad way, '*You're on it, you're on it.*' Anyone can imagine the effect this would have on an audience who knew the actor's ways so well. Whenever he had to go off, he left the end of this train behind him for some time, when all at once, in the middle of a scene and quite unexpectedly, the bit that was still in sight would suddenly disappear with a palpable jerk. By the time this had happened twice or thrice, the audience looked for its recurrence, and then laughed immoderately. Clarke was furious, and declared that it was all planned to annoy him. When they sang the duet over which they had such a discussion, the end of Jimmy's train was of course *off* the stage, and he had arranged that some heavy weight should be on the end of it which was out of sight, so that all through the duet it appeared as though some one was standing on the other end of it (a ripple of laughter going on amongst the audience all the while); Jimmy only now and then looked at he offending garment with a resigned and patient expression. When the duet was over the strain suddenly relaxed. The effect of this was that the whole house was convulsed with laughter. Clarke's indignation was indescribable. While the finale of the burlesque was sung by all the characters, Jimmy stood in the corner of the stage, with his long train arranged to reach the footlights. When the curtain fell, and all concerned were called before the curtain, Clarke insisted on going *before* Jimmy, and not *with* him. 'He wasn't going to have his applause at such a moment interfered with by Jimmy's tomfoolery; he might do what he liked with his absurd train, *after* he had gone off.' So on Clarke went. He was loudly cheered, and was smiling with supreme satisfaction as he crossed the stage, when, just as he was making his final bow, he tripped over the train, which Jimmy had carefully left as it appeared, before the curtain fell, close to the footlights. This created a roar from the house, and was the last straw to Clarke. He was afterwards heard to say that 'There ought not to be two low comedians in one piece.' The public did not agree with him.

Then came the *Miller and his Men*, described by its joint authors, Talfourd and Byron, as a burlesque *mealy*-drama. Another boy's part for me! This time I was relegated to the stables, as I had to play a groom, Karl, or in the words of the authors, 'An English tiger, from the wild jungles of Belgravia.' Grindoff, the miller, 'and the leader of a very brass band of most unpopular performers, with a thorough base accompaniment of at least fifty vices,' was played by Miss Saunders; the rival comedians—Clarke being Lothair, a virtuous peasant, and Rogers a forlorn old woman, Ravina—were still 'both in the same piece;' in which other Strand favourites, whom I have not yet mentioned, clever Maria Simpson, handsome Eleanor Bufton, and that delightful dancer and amiable woman, Rosina Wright, also appeared. The rivals, of course, had all sorts of little troubles during the run, and especially on the last

night of it. Rogers slipped off the stage towards the end, and as Clarke was speaking his final lines, just before the general chorus, a ripple of laughter ran through the house. Clarke mistook this for a tribute to himself, and was beaming with smiles, when suddenly a loud thunder-clap, and then a slow, tremulous, and rumbling noise was heard, followed by a roar of laughter ; Clarke turned round, wondering what on earth was the matter, and saw Jimmy dressed as the ghost of Ravina, in a long white robe, a cap with an enormous frill, a pale, sad face, and carrying a lighted bedroom candle, rising through the clouds to the 'ghost melody' from the *Corsican Brothers*. I need not say that not another word of the play or a note of the finale was heard. When the curtain fell and Clarke had disappeared in positive anguish, Jimmy quietly remarked that he had arranged with the conductor of the orchestra and the carpenters a little surprise for the last night, feeling sure that it would greatly amuse the audience, and, above all, delight Clarke !

So far as I can tax a memory very imperfect as to dates, it was at this time that I had the good fortune to attract the notice of a once distinguished actress (as Miss Foote), but whom I, of course, only knew as the Dowager Countess of Harrington. She wrote to me to say that she had been several times to see me act, and that she felt obliged to tell me of the impression I had made upon her, asking 'to be allowed to call on me.' I was, of course, delighted.

My father had known her slightly when she was at her zenith, and would often speak of her as one of the loveliest and most amiable of women. He would recall not only the charm she possessed as an accomplished actress, but her good-nature to everybody, high and low, in the theatre. It will be needless for me to say how I looked forward to talking to her. She stayed a long time the first day she called, and I soon found that the account my father gave of her charm of manner had not been exaggerated.

My mother had never met Lady Harrington, but she soon grew much attached to one who became a true friend to me, and as time went on seemed more and more endeared to me. Lady Harrington would often speak of days gone by, and would assure me that she was *not* a great actress ; adding, 'People were pleased to say I was charming, so I suppose I was.' She must have been very beautiful when young, being still extremely handsome as an old lady. She was as good, too, as she was handsome ; and I can never forget her kindness to me. When I was once seriously ill with an attack of bronchitis, Lady Harrington was unwearying in her attention to me, and would, day after day, sit by my bedside reading to me, and would bring with her all the delicacies she could think of. When I had sufficiently recovered my strength, she sent me to the seaside to recruit my health. To record all the kindnesses she bestowed on me and mine would fill up many pages, but my gratitude is indelibly written on my heart. She gave me a portrait of herself, as Maria Darlington in *A Rowland for an Oliver*, and

by it one can see how lovely she must have been. Among her other gifts was a beautiful old-fashioned diamond and ruby ring, which she told me was given to her by the Earl (who was then Lord Petersham) when he was engaged to be married to her. She always called me by my second name, 'Effie,' and all her letters to me, of which I have a large number, are so addressed. If well enough, she rarely failed to be present on the first night of a new piece in which I acted ; and if by chance prevented, would send old Payne, her butler, who had been her faithful servant for ever so many years, into the pit, and in the morning he was expected to go to her ladyship with a full account of my performance, and to say what I wore, and how I looked. Payne, for the purpose, took paper and pencil with him to write down all the particulars, as she loved to hear every detail. Lady Harrington was much attached to Payne, and also to her maid, who, I believe, had been in her service since she was quite young, and often spoke of them as *Romeo* and *Juliet*. She constantly expressed a wish to see me established as a comedy actress, and begged me to try hard for that position. To tell the truth, I must have been a great trouble at times to my kindly manager, for the fact of having acted successfully in two or three little comediettas seemed more and more to whet my appetite. I recall many a happy visit to Richmond Terrace, and until her last illness I had no better friend than Lady Harrington.

When Miss Swanborough on her marriage with Major Lyon retired from the stage and her management of the Strand Theatre, everyone engaged there, high and low, regretted her loss. She was always considerate and kind, and I can remember the graceful speech she made when we presented her with a handsome testimonial as a farewell token of our affection. Her forte in acting was comedy, and she was very charming in the *Loves of Arcadia*, a pretty pastoral from the pen of that distinguished authoress and good friend Miss Braddon, who, it may be already forgotten, commenced her career as an actress : certainly she has never lost her great love for the stage. Miss Swanborough was handsome, tall, and graceful, and always dressed in perfect taste. I have had the pleasure of meeting her now and then since she was '*My Mother*,' as she jokingly said the last time I saw her. When our own management was drawing to a close, I received a letter from her which I shall always treasure ; and I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking her for many acts of kindness to me during the time I had the privilege of being in her service.

After Miss Swanborough's retirement, the theatre remained under the management of other members of her family.

The next burlesque I have to speak about was *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp*, the personation of this promising young gentleman—who was both a 'lively youth' and a 'sad boy'—falling to me. All the Strand favourites were engaged in it, with the addition of a charming recruit to the company—the graceful and fascinating

Fanny Josephs. Like all Byron's clever burlesques, at this time *Aladain* enjoyed great success. It was strongly cast and admirably played. Many of the old Strand audiences will recall Jimmy Rogers as the Widow Twankay, Aladdin's mother, who, to quote the Arabian Nights, 'Even in her youth had not possessed any beauty.'

There was no attempt to exaggerate in either dress or acting. When he entered with a woe-begone face and looked at the audience, nothing else was seen or heard for some seconds. But, however Jimmy might provoke his audience to laughter, he would not be tempted to laugh himself. I only saw this happen to him upon the stage once, and that was caused by a circumstance at which the most rigid must have given way.

This is the story. Very often during the run of *Aladdin*—and sometimes night after night—there sat in the middle of the pit a stout, bald-headed man, who appeared to be not only a faithful friend to the theatre, but a warm admirer of little Clarke, to whom he was a great comfort, for whenever Jimmy got more applause than Clarke thought was his share, his sheet-anchor was the bald-headed friend in the pit, who, when Clarke said or did anything to provoke applause, would laugh louder than anyone else, and, when the applause had quite subsided and everything was still, would shout at the top of his voice, 'Bravo, Clarke!'

This happened so often that people began to tease Clarke about it, and even the audience would sometimes turn into ridicule this incessant cry of 'Bravo, Clarke!' Clarke dearly loved praise, but when he found his bald-headed admirer a little injudicious in his approval, he became uneasy. One night the owner of the hairless head, who had been waiting at the stage-door to see Clarke leave the theatre, stepped up to him and requested to be allowed to 'have the honour of shaking hands with one for whom he had such sincere admiration.' Clarke recognised his friend the moment he raised his hat, for he saw the familiar bald head shining under a gas-light, and shook hands with his admirer, who modestly said, 'I'm sure you will remember me, sir, when I tell you that I am the person who so often sits in the middle of the pit, and I am so anxious that you should know how sincere is my admiration, that I call out, whenever I see an opportunity, "Bravo, Clarke!"' This was a moment not to be lost. 'I appreciate more than I can say,' said Clarke, 'your kind attention; and it is, I assure you, a welcome sound to me to hear your friendly voice. But, unfortunately, there are people who are ever ready to ridicule over-favouritism. Do you think you could throw in "Bravo, Clarke" less frequently, and not in so marked a manner? Let it on no account cease altogether, only give it with more judgment.' The man replied, 'Certainly, sir; of course I will,' and they parted. The next night the house was full as usual, and the bald head was again the centre-piece of beauty in the pit. All through the first scene the well-known voice

was silent; one could see an anxious look gradually becoming more and more fixed upon Clarke's face. He glared again and again in the direction of the pit, but no 'Bravo, Clarke!' greeted his anxious ears. At last, when Rogers, Clarke, and myself sang the trio which ended the scene, the familiar voice shouted repeatedly, to Clarke's horror, 'Bravo, Rogers!' Clarke's face caught Jimmy's eye, who laughed to such a degree that the tears rolled down his cheeks. Poor Clarke never forgot it; the more disgusted he looked, the more Rogers laughed. All this so amused us that it was with difficulty we managed to get through our parts; for throughout the evening this man, at unexpected moments, would cry out, 'Bravo, Rogers!' giving, of course, fresh impetus to our laughter. This was the only time I ever saw Rogers laugh in the business of the scene, and then it was an impossibility for anyone who understood the circumstances, and was not made of stone, to help it.

Then came *Esmeralda*, in which I played Pierre Gringoire; Rogers, who was always of delicate health, and now often very ill, played Claude Frollo; and Clarke, with a wonderful make-up, was Quasimodo. Occasionally, and sometimes on 'benefit' nights, I now, to my delight, got other parts, notably Lucy Morton, originally played by Madame Vestris in Planché's charming little comedy *Court Favour*, a performance of which the *Athenæum* spoke in these terms: 'The *petite* figure of Miss Wilton is well suited to the half-infant character, and there is a subtlety in her style which gives piquancy to the dialogue between Lucy and the Duke of Albemarle, whom she so cunningly over-reaches.'

The next burlesque I acted in was, I think, Byron's parody on the *Colleen Bawn*, called *Miss Eily O'Connor*. I was cast for another boy—Myles-na-Coppaleen, in which I introduced a strong Irish brogue. Rogers was Miss Eily, and Clarke Danny Mann; two admirable performances, although poor Jimmy now suffered so much at times that it was painful to see him waiting for his cue to go on the stage, but, somehow, the hearty welcome which always greeted him would be such a stimulant that, after awhile, he would act as if nothing were amiss. How little does an audience know what actors fight against in the exercise of duty—how much pain they have been known to suffer bodily and mentally in order to go through their work! A true artist will never break faith with the public while still able to stand or speak. His sense of duty is paramount, and he must indeed be *in extremis* before he will desert his post. I am speaking of *artists* in the true sense, not of those who out of conceit adopt the theatrical profession as a pastime, and into whose consideration art seldom enters. One of the latter category succeeded in obtaining an engagement at the Strand Theatre while I was there, to play small parts. She had a pretty face, and, in her opinion, nothing more seemed necessary. One night this young recruit did not come near the theatre at all, and a substitute was hurriedly sent on for her part, which, fortunately, was limited

to a few lines. The next evening the lady arrived at the usual time, making neither apology nor excuse, and offering no explanation of her absence. The stage-manager angrily inquired, 'How is it you were not here last night?' 'I could not come,' she replied, staring with astonishment at his question. 'Why?' he asked. '*It rained*,' she answered. She was politely informed that, as our English weather was somewhat uncertain, and a foreign climate might perhaps suit her better, her services would be required no longer. She left the theatre saying, 'It was a cruel profession to be expected to leave one's home on a night not fit to turn a dog out!'

Jimmy was often helped from his cab to his dressing-room, looking so ill and weak that I have wondered his doctor did not insist upon his not coming (which, I believe, was frequently the case); but he was obstinate, and would not disappoint the public. There is something in the atmosphere of a theatre which picks one up, so to speak, and which seems to give one, for the time, almost superhuman strength. I have myself been taken from a sick-bed wrapped in blankets, accompanied by my doctor (protesting all the time), who was afterwards stationed at the side-entrance to the stage with drugs and restoratives to keep me up. I have known the most acute pains to disappear for the time, and the mere fact of one's thoughts running through another channel for some hours has frequently helped a speedy recovery. I have seen Jimmy rally to such a degree that it has made us wonder, and through it all he would be so quaintly funny, so sadly comic, that we could not resist smiling, forgetting for the moment how ill he was. There was a complete unconsciousness of his own power to make one laugh, which was more droll than I can describe. It was irresistible: a sad face with a curious undercurrent of humour—an odd, quiet look of surprise when the audience roared at him, and the more sadly surprised he appeared the more they laughed. He was the strangest mixture of combined fun and suffering I can remember. Jimmy was really a fair and generous actor, but could not resist the temptation to tease Clarke sometimes, who was, however, a great favourite, and held his own with the public for many years. He was very clever, and much liked by all of us as a kindly little man. In spite of his jealousies, and always looking on Jimmy as a formidable rival, he would feel deeply for him in his sufferings, and would have done anything in his power to help him. This Jimmy knew full well, and they were really fond of each other. When the play was over (as often happens with barristers after a 'keen encounter of their tongues') they might frequently have been seen walking from the theatre together arm in arm.

When the *Miller and his Men* was revived, I was, of course, given my original part of Karl; but I decided to take a bold step, and declined to play it. According to the rules and regulations of the theatre, 'by refusing to act a part which was in accordance with my agreement' (and especially one which I had played originally),

I forfeited my engagement. I determined to do this, at all risks, in the hope of obtaining somewhere the position I coveted. But alas ! I soon found that I had made a mistake, for there was not that eagerness on the part of the managers to secure my services I thought there would be, and the difficulty to get out of the beaten track was greater than I anticipated. I applied everywhere, and nowhere could I get an engagement for comedy. Matters were becoming serious, when an offer came from Mr. Frank Matthews, who was then manager of the St. James's Theatre ; but it was for another burlesque boy in the *Heart of Midlothian.* It may be of some interest to state, in contrast to what actors are paid nowadays (a change for which our own management is chiefly responsible), that the largest salary I had hitherto received in London was nine pounds a week, and that Mr. Matthews then offered me ten guineas ; but as the engagement was only to be for three months, I was advised to ask fifteen pounds. After a long correspondence, Mr. Matthews consented, on the condition that in my written agreement ten guineas was entered as my salary, and that every Saturday night he would, when he said 'Good-evening,' slip the balance into my hand. He wished me to agree to this arrangement, as mine, he said, would be a larger salary than that of another lady in the theatre, who held a leading position ; and, if it came to her knowledge, might cause jealousy, as he did not care to trust to the discretion of his treasurer. This novel arrangement was settled to our mutual satisfaction, although it was often remarked that Mr. Matthews was always pointedly cordial in his greeting on Saturdays, as he, on those nights *only*, shook hands with me.

Poor Jimmy Rogers had also seceded from the Strand Theatre—it was evident that his health was becoming worse and worse. But, to the astonishment of all who knew him, he engaged himself to act in the *Heart of Midlothian.* I was delighted at the fact of meeting him again, but found him sadly changed, and looking like a faded photograph. I was shocked and pained when I held his poor, thin hand in mine, and gazed at his wan face and sunken eyes. I could see that the cruel, relentless malady, consumption, had slowly yet surely crept its way. My heart was too full of tears for me to utter a word of welcome, and when he looked at me with his sad smile, he could see that I dared not trust myself to speak. I forget how long he acted his part of Effie Deans, but seeing him grow weaker and weaker every night made my duties very painful. It was such a ghastly mockery to act in burlesque with a man who was dying before my eyes ! At last, one night I noticed him coming down slowly from his dressing-room, supporting himself by the banisters, and halting on every second or third step. I met him at the foot of the stairs, when he placed his hand upon my shoulder and seemed to breathe with great difficulty. I helped him towards the stage, and begged him to sit down ; a chair was brought to him, but he

declined, saying in broken sentences, 'I dare not—I shall never—get up again.' He then whispered to me, 'Marie dear, help me through it to-night—do what you can for me—I am not well—dear—not at all well.'

Not well! No, poor fellow, the end was not far off. He had scarcely breath to speak. I said to him, 'Oh, Jimmy, why did you come here to-night?' 'My fault, dear,' he replied; 'I would come. I shall be all right to-morrow.' His words had such an ominous sound. He could only walk through the piece, leaning upon my shoulder when we were on the stage together. As I found his breath failing him, I either spoke his words or continued with my own. Towards the end of the piece his hands became cold, and his face so changed that my heart was sick with fear. The audience little knew that they were laughing at a dying man. How I managed to get through it all I don't know, but necessity makes us strong. I thought the end of the play would never come. He would allow no one but me to help or advise him; indeed, at moments he became fractious, and my task was truly painful. Just as the curtain fell he muttered, 'Thank you, my dear; God bless you and help me!' He sank into a chair, and as I knelt by his side he looked strangely at me, and whispered, 'I am dying.' He was taken home, where his poor little wife, to whom he was devoted, had been anxiously waiting for his return. He would not, I heard, allow her to think that he was so ill as he felt, and insisted on going through his work to the last, in defiance of all advice. The end soon came, and his last words were, 'The farce is over—drop the curtain.' *Poor Jimmy!* You will ever be remembered by those who knew you best as a kind and generous friend. No one in trouble or in need ever sought your help in vain. 'Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?'

When James Rogers died, no one regretted his death more than his old friend and rival, John Clarke.

My engagement at the St. James's was soon over, when I was sent for by Mr. Webster to act for three or four weeks at the Adelphi in the *Little Treasure*, in which Mr. Sothern at first played Captain Walter Maydenblush, the part being afterwards taken by my friend Mr. Billington—'Handsome Jack,' as he used to be called. I hoped this might be a stepping-stone to the goal I was trying for, but my Lady Fortune seemed to have turned her back upon me for a time, and instead of offers pouring in, no notice was taken of me, and I saw no anxiety to secure my services.

This performance reminds me that when I had lost the title of Cupid, the epithet 'Little' for a long time took its place; for I was in turn 'The *Little* Treasure,' 'The *Little* Savage,' 'The *Little* Sentinel,' 'The *Little* Devil,' and '*Little* Don Giovanni.'

There was an old member of the new Adelphi company who, when I mention his name, will be remembered by many who knew

him as an eccentric and amusing character of days gone by—Robert, but always known as 'Bob,' Romer. He was not an important actor, but such an oddity that without him the company would not have seemed complete, for everybody had an affection for him. Bob was ambitious, but never reached the summit (or anywhere near it) of his ambition. He was rarely, I believe, entrusted with more than a few lines, and constantly, when a new play was about to be produced, some friend would delight in asking him what his part would be in it. His reply would be always the same: 'A—what have I got to do? Oh—a—nothing—at all—in the first and second acts—and—a—next to nothing—in the last.' He spoke in quaint, rapid jerks, and, after a slight pause, his words would seem to try to get one before the other. I remember meeting him one morning when he had just left the theatre after rehearsing in a new piece. As I saw his portly figure coming along, I could not resist asking the well-worn question, 'What have you got to do in the new play, Mr. Romer?' 'A—a—what—have I—got to do? Oh—a—same old thing—nothing—a—nothing at all.' 'Nothing at all?' I replied. 'A—a—well—a—the old story—a few—idiotic lines, and "exit." In the last—piece but one, I—a—was—a magistrate—nothing to do but—wear a wig—and—a—take it off again. In the next—I was—a—a—rustic—nothing to do—but—to drink the health of the Squire—in an empty jug—shout out "Hurray"—laugh "Ha! ha!"—and go off—with a noisy crowd. A—in this piece—I play—an Alligator.' 'A what, Mr. Romer?' 'An Alligator—curious—line of business. I'm discovered—a—at the beginning of this piece in a tank. All I have to say is "*Tan—ter—ran—tan—tan!*" I don't appear again till the last scene, when I say "*Whack—fal—la!*" It won't—tax the brain much!' Poor 'Bob' was the subject of much amusement to his comrades. He had one particular horror, that of coming up through trap-doors. He vowed that he would leave the theatre if ever he was asked to appear through a trap. As Mr. Toole was in the company, I need not say that he took special delight in constantly measuring Bob for an imaginary trap in the coming play—a proceeding which he never got accustomed to, and always became excited over. Bob, when asked by a friend what his line of business in the theatre was, answered, 'Oh—a—*etceteras*.' It was a fact that whenever a play was read by the author to the company, after giving out the list of characters and finishing with 'etc., etc.,' Bob would be heard muttering *sotto voce*, 'Ah—that's—me.'

One more story of this quaint old gentleman will not, I hope, bore the reader. I remember an amusing scene occurring one morning as I arrived at the stage-door to attend a rehearsal, when I heard Bob questioning the hall-porter with a mysterious and puzzled expression in his face. First of all I must explain that on the previous day a little dinner had been given to him by a few friends in the company who desired to have a good joke at poor

Bob's expense, and to have one or two speeches about his untried talents, and to sympathize with his failure in ever getting a good part. The poor fellow rose to reply, and, after a lengthy speech, which I believe caused much suppressed but undetected laughter, he ended by saying, 'A—I feel much touched by—your—a—sympathy ; and with regard to my—a—hidden ability—a—light under a bushel—I may say—if I am not important, I am at least—a—pleasing.'

This miniature banquet was kept up until ten o'clock, for Bob had not to appear on the stage before eleven, just to act one of his celebrated 'next to nothing' parts. He had partaken rather freely of the wine, and was somewhat unsteady. When he awoke on the following morning, he had a vague recollection of the dinner, but, for the life of him, could not remember anything that happened afterwards, and his anxiety to find out how things went off at the theatre was very great. When I arrived at the stage-door, a conversation to this effect was going on between Bob and the hall-porter :

BOB : 'A—good house—last night, Richardson ?'
PORTER : 'Yes, sir ; *very* good house.'
BOB : 'A—nothing—went wrong at all ?'
PORTER : 'Nothing, sir.'
BOB : 'A—how did the farce go ?'
PORTER : 'Not so well as usual, I was told, sir.'
BOB (*quickly*) : 'Not so well ? How's that ?'
PORTER : 'I did hear, sir, that it were 'issed.'
BOB : 'Bless my soul ! Was Mr.—a—Webster in the theatre ?'
PORTER : 'He had gone 'ome, sir.'
BOB (*breathing more easily*) : 'Is he here this morning ?'
PORTER : 'Yes, sir, just arrived.'
BOB : 'A—did he—ask for me !'
PORTER : 'No, sir.'
BOB (*after cautiously looking round*) : 'About last night ?—a—*was I here ?*'

Mrs. Swanborough offered me a re-engagement to play the hero in a forthcoming burlesque by Byron called *Orpheus and Eurydice*. I was a beggar and could not choose, so I agreed, and returned to my former home. I wish it to be understood that my relations with the Strand management were then, and always had been, of a cordial nature. I met with constant kindness from all the Swanborough family, of which Ada had now grown to be a prominent member, and we were the best of friends. It was only my impatient desire to improve my position that parted us.

There were many changes in the company. George Honey was now the principal comedian, supported by Arthur Wood, an admirable actor, who also graduated under old Mr. Chute, at the Bristol Theatre, and David James, who then made his first appearance at the Strand Theatre, where afterwards he became so promi-

nent. Pretty Fanny Hughes—who married Edward Swanborough—had also become a favourite, and I remember singing a clever duet with her to the combined tunes of the 'Whistling Thief' and the 'Harp in the Air.' I was delighted with an opportunity I soon afterwards had of acting in a charming little comedietta called *Unlimited Confidence*, written by A. C. Troughton, which was a great success, only, through being placed first in the programme, often the audience would not be all in to see it. A message came one day that the Prince of Wales would visit the theatre that evening, and that his Royal Highness desired my piece to be placed second, as he wished to see it. How delighted I was! The compliment, of course, made me feel very proud. I also acted in one more burlesque, called *Mazourka*.

I must not omit a brief reference to the Shakespearean Tercentenary. When that great event was celebrated the theatres united in honouring the poet's memory, either complete plays, or selections from them, being acted throughout the country.

The Strand contribution consisted of scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, in which I appeared as Juliet, and Miss Ada Swanborough as Romeo. The balcony scene created quite a sensation, and was so successful that it was repeated for eight nights. I received such praise, and so many complimentary letters from good judges, that it will be understood how still more anxious I became to slip out of burlesque as quickly as possible. Some thought me wise, others mad; and, while they were deciding between the two, I determined to follow my own instincts and the urgent appeal to Mrs. Dombey, 'to make an effort.' Some time afterwards I heard that among those warmest in their praise of my acting as Juliet was Mr. W. S. Gilbert.

In the summer Mrs. Swanborough took her company down to the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, where, as will be mentioned further on, I first met Mr. Bancroft. We were playing in the burlesque of *Orpheus*, I remember, when some races were going on, and the winner of the Cup was called 'Black Deer;' in the evening Mr. George Honey, who was playing black 'King Pluto,' introduced an unexpected joke in my scene with him. 'Saucy boy! You've been to the races, it is clear.' I was taken by surprise; but soon recovered, and replied, 'Yes, and was a winner, too, you *Black Dear*.' The audience at once recognised the introduction, and received it with much laughter and applause. Mr. Honey, seeing that I had the best of it, added, 'Oh, so I thought; well, long may you *reign, dear*.' This, being done on the spur of the moment, was more successful than if it had been pre-arranged.

I will end these reminiscences of early days with a story of my childhood, of which I was reminded during this visit to Liverpool.

One day I received a letter, which vividly recalled to my recollection (shall I ever forget it?) a remarkable journey I undertook

years before, when I was but a mere child. The story, I fancy, will go far to prove that courage and determination were, even at that early age, strong points in my nature, although, in this instance, my youthful impetuosity might have led to serious complications. My father, with myself and three sisters, were in Scotland, while my mother, with two other tiny sisters, were in Lancashire, fulfilling an engagement. News came that she was seriously ill. I knew that her great anxiety would be about her children, and how she would wish them to be near her. What was to be done? My father had gone away some distance with the company he was attached to, to act somewhere, leaving us children in charge of the landlady. I made up my little mind to take two of my sisters (one was mentally afflicted, and I dared not risk it) to my mother. But how, and by what means? I went to the pier, and found out that a boat was going to Glasgow that night. I learnt, also, that on the day of our arrival a steamer would leave Glasgow for Liverpool. I inquired all about the cost of the journey, and decided without any hesitation, knowing the chronic state of our finances, upon the cheapest part of the vessel. I turned it all over in my limited brain, which did not admit of room to consider risks, difficulties, and consequences; I only knew that our mother was ill, and if she should die without seeing us it would be a reproach to us all. I am ashamed to say that my father's anxiety and displeasure at the discovery of our departure on his return home never entered my already overcrowded mind. There was a small sum of money in the house, realized by an entertainment which he and I had given. This I took, and secured the tickets for myself and two sisters, who were too young to understand the meaning of my wild scheme. The boat was to start that night, and my next anxiety was how to leave the house without the knowledge of our landlady. (I can hear my readers say, 'Was there ever so mad a proceeding?' and I agree with them.) My father frequently alluded to it, and with a grave shake of the head implied that he had not forgiven the terrible scare my proceeding cost him.

But to return. I packed all the things I thought necessary in a carpet-bag (our wardrobe was limited, so it did not take long), dressed myself and sisters, and waited till the family prayers had begun in the room below. When I heard the murmur of voices, we went downstairs as noiselessly as possible, carefully dropping the carpet-bag with a heavy thud, as is so often the case when one is doubly cautious. The noise luckily was not heard, owing to the wind that was howling outside, and away we went to the boat, which was rocking about in troubled waters, and the sight of which would now turn my steps in an opposite direction; but youth knows no fear. We went on board. What a night it was! We were all very frightened, and one of my young sisters entreated to be allowed 'to get out and walk'! My task to cheer them, and bear the consequences of a rough passage, must be understood, for I cannot

describe it. On our arrival at Glasgow, I made the terrible discovery that my pocket had been picked, and every penny of my poor possessions gone. I was completely heartbroken, and did not know which way to turn, for I had nothing left to pay for our journey to Liverpool.

In the greatest despair I inquired my way to the ship we were to go by, and then asked to see the captain, or some one who would help us to get to our journey's end. When I told my little story, the captain laughed, and said how naughty I had been, and that he thought it was his duty to send me back to my father ; but when I cried, and explained how ill my mother was, he seemed touched, and said, 'Well, you are, at this stage of your journey, almost as near your mother as to your father, so I'll take you to her. But I daren't bring you along as passengers : if you don't mind coming aboard with those who go free, you know, to Liverpool (why didn't he say paupers ? but I suppose he hesitated to wound my feelings), why, it can be done, and I'll get a pass for you. What is your name ?' I did not answer at once, and he evidently understood, for he immediately said, 'I'll put it down as Briton, for few little girls could be so brave as you are ; so you deserve the name of Briton, and I'll give it you.' He patted me on the head, and knowing that my money had been stolen, and I could get no dinner, he gave us sandwiches. When night came we three little waifs were placed on shore amongst the paupers, and when the name 'Briton' was called, I went on board with a little sister by each hand. The captain, as we passed, patted me on the head. I looked up at him, and, I am not sure, but if it had been daylight, I think I should have seen tears in his eyes. It was a rough night again, and as I sat down in the cabin, which was full of tobacco-smoke, I felt that if we remained there we should be very ill ; so I planted myself with the two children on the steps, where we could get air. By-and-by, the language amongst 'the free passengers' became so dreadful that I covered the children's heads with their coats to prevent their hearing, and they went to sleep. I felt very unhappy, and began to cry as I realized what a rash thing I had done. Presently one of the ship's officers, quite young-looking, came along, and, seeing me cry, stopped and spoke to me. He soon discovered that we were different from our surroundings, and took us to his own cabin, where he left us, only now and again peeping in during the night to see if we were all right. In the morning he brought us some breakfast, and, when we arrived at Liverpool, the captain instructed him to take us to an address which I gave him of a great friend of my father's family, Mr. Warne, a lime merchant, who told the young seaman my name, and who we were. He then took charge of us, and sent us on comfortably enough to my mother, who was at Wigan. The unexpected sight of her children frightened my mother, but it certainly had the effect of causing a revulsion, because she was much better the next day. My father was imme-

diately communicated with, and the whole proceedings related to him. He also learnt that the confusion in the house when it was discovered that we had gone was indescribable. The next day the bellman, or crier, was shouting everywhere, 'Oh yes! Oh yes! Lost, stolen, or strayed,' etc. My father, hastily summoned home, was almost deprived of reason by a fruitless search. He threatened to punish the landlady for her neglect, and the whole affair caused a terrible commotion. When my father received news of our safety, the reaction made him very ill for some days. So I had much to answer for. Now for the sequel to this story.

The writer of the note I received in Liverpool was the very man who had rescued us from the society of our 'free passengers,' and had watched us with such tender care on that memorable night. My heart was full of that rare commodity which I often read of in books, gratitude; and when, by my wish, he came to see me, I welcomed his kindly face with sincerity. Later on, having made a position for himself, and being on the point of going to settle in one of our colonies, he asked me to become his wife. I wished I could have said yes, for a man with such a heart must have made a good husband; my feelings, however, were only those of gratitude, not love, and I was obliged to tell him so. I was going to say 'poor fellow,' but I am sure he is, if still living, happy and prosperous, as he deserves to be.

I frequently reflect how largely life is made up of accidents. Had I accepted the offer of my young sailor friend, how, I wonder, would my doing so have affected both my own and my husband's fate.

MR. BANCROFT'S NARRATIVE

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY MEMORIES.

A gift of memory—Birth and parentage—Childhood's days—Early recollections—Discovery of short sight—Always stage-struck—First saw Marie Wilton—Visit to New York—Remembrances of the City—Theatrical recollections of the Old World and the New—The stage-door.

THE surmise which ends the preceding chapter can never be solved, for I have to thank my good fortune that when, later on, I ventured to repeat to Marie Wilton the question asked in vain by the young sailor, I met with an assent. I must now beg forgiveness for interrupting this narrative, to tell of things that happened before those days arrived; and with a warning that this and the following chapter will chiefly concern myself, and my early experiences as a country actor, I ask for the reader's lenient thoughts during their recital, before proceeding to matters of more consequence: for, from the time we met and, afterwards, linked our lives and fortunes, we will tell our tale together, helping each other's work throughout it, although now and then one or the other of us will relate certain parts of it alone, through more intimate and detailed knowledge of its varied incidents.

I shall owe much to the gift of a retentive memory, which is perhaps remarkable in regard to dates and things theatrical; for it would be no trouble to me to answer straight off, wagering on the exactitude of my every answer, and arming my questioner with a twenty years' file of the *Times*, where I was, and, if acting, what part I was playing, in any month, of any year, between the summers of 1865 and 1885. Or, if I was away from home for a holiday, I could as easily give an itinerary of my travels.

Since relief from the many labours of management gave me leisure, I have often thought that I could remember something of events which might be worth recording, and, I confess, have been vain enough to hope that my reflections upon them would be, if I

tried to express them, read at least by lovers of the stage and the players. In what I write I will follow the words of the brightest mind that has illumined England, by means of those wondrous works which have for ever dignified the calling I have followed :

'Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.'

If I disobey the injunction, it shall be rather in the first than in the second behest. Merely adding that I will try not to give way to egotism, for my self-esteem may be fairly expressed in the words of Captain Hawtree, 'I don't pretend to be a particularly good sort of fellow, nor a particularly bad sort of fellow.'

There is but little, it seems to me, that I could tell of my childhood or of my boyhood to interest the ordinary reader ; nearly all to whom such matters might once have had even a small value have either passed away or have been neither seen nor known by me since those now far-off days.

I was born in Surrey, but very near to London, on Friday, May 14th, 1841, in the same year as the Prince of Wales ; and the weeks of my age I can count every Wednesday by the number recorded on the title-page of *Punch*, which publication almost immediately followed me into the world, where it will long survive me.

I was christened Squire Bancroft after my grandfather, who had once been tutor to the then heir to the dukedom of Devonshire, and was a great Latin scholar, airing his learning at the font, for although he allowed his eldest son—who, after serving his King as a middy in the Royal Navy in the days of Nelson, was ordained as a clergyman, and, indeed, many years later, officiated at my marriage—to escape with the simple name of John, he called my father Secundus, and his next son Gulielmus Tertius. I only thus briefly mention my grandfather because I owed my name to him, but I shall not trouble the reader with any further account of my ancestors.

I was brought up in some luxury, and surrounded by all the gentle influences one could wish. I have remembrances now of my father on his horse, wearing a blue coat with gilt buttons, and a bird's-eye cravat, looking, indeed, very like one of the coloured drawings so well known to all Londoners a few years ago who ever looked into the windows of 'Billy' Sams's Library, at the corner of St. James's Street and Pall Mall, where the big red house now stands instead.

I can recall early morning visits to the green-houses, my little hand held lovingly in my father's, and many a romp round a big mulberry-tree ; but such pleasant days of childhood, chastened by one dreadful recollection of a big clock in the hall, past which I always hurried in the fear that some one was hidden inside its roomy case, were not my fate for long. My father was stricken with a painful malady which soon ended in his death, and with him, or rather with his illness, died nearly all his income.

At the age of barely more than thirty my poor mother, who was much younger than her husband, was left with her young children in a very altered position. The dreams of public school and college education for her sons were never to be realized ; but how nobly she did all that her crippled means would reach is a memory hallowed by me, and one which I care not to dwell on here.

Briefly I will add that I was educated at private schools in England and in France. At one of the former, among my schoolmates, although my memory almost fails to more than just recall him, was my afterwards friend and comrade, poor Harry Montague. When I think of my foreign home, it is still with a shudder at the recollection of an old woman who daily entered the dormitory at six a.m., and shrieked 'Levez-vous, messieurs!' as she threw the windows wide open, whatever the weather, and filled our basins with water from a well.

I can remember, during my holidays, going to the Exhibition of 1851, and being sent for home to see the funeral of the great Duke of Wellington ; part of the wreck of my father's now rapidly dwindling property being a house in Fleet Street, near Temple Bar, which on that solemn day was draped in black and bore big urns of burning incense. The house I speak of was long since pulled down to give place to a palatial Insurance Office, but my mother's tenant then offered her seats to see a procession which stirred the English people in a way that comes but seldom. While abroad I recollect the birth of the Prince Imperial, and, returning to England soon afterwards, I saw the general illuminations in celebration of peace after the Crimean War. This I mention because, strange to say, I remember well being blocked for some very long time just in front of the house I occupied years afterwards in Cavendish Square.

When Edmund Yates published his delightful book of 'Recollections' I was among its earliest readers. In one of the commencing chapters I was greatly struck to find, in spite of a ten years' gap between our ages, how many of the things which marked, as it were, the author's youth, and now have passed away, I could myself remember.

I make no effort, like that practised writer, to treat these matters with a charm of style such as pervades his book, but briefly try to call to mind what I really know I have seen. The 'twopenny' and 'general' postmen, with their royal-blue or scarlet coats, looking, indeed, very like the guards of the stage-coaches, I quite remember, as I do the policemen in their blue tail-coats, their hats with shiny tops and sides, their duck trousers, and white gloves. The foot-guards, clad in swallow-tails, with epaulettes and cross-belts, white trousers, and enormous bearskins (how often have their little effigies been bought for me in the Lowther Arcade !), I picture readily in Hyde Park, where then, at all the keepers' lodges, Cockney boys and girls invested pennies in curds-and-whey or hardbake. The

Quakers in their quaint clothing I also recollect. I remember, too, the boys who swarmed the chimneys and wore brass badges on their caps;—the sweep's street-cry, the dustman's bell, the old-clothes man's husky call (repeated every moment as he tramped along under the burden of his bag and pyramid of hats), the song of the buy-a-broom girls ('a large one for the lady and a small one for the baby')—all are treasured by me as part of the music of my childhood. I can just recall the statue of the Iron Duke at Hyde Park Corner when it first was placed there, and being shown the Thames Tunnel soon after its completion. I remember, too, going to Blackwall by the Rope Railway, the Colonnade in Regent Street, the pens in Old Smithfield Market, the piling and strapping of luggage on the roofs of the railway carriages when travelling by train; these recollections also embrace the Chartist Riots of 1848, while the names of Rush and Manning told me first what murder meant.

Before I end this reference to early memories, I would like to tell how first I knew myself to be short-sighted. One day at home, when I was a small boy, my sisters were at work with their governess; the lady wore spectacles, which she had taken off and placed upon the table—always a magnetic act to mischievous young boys. How often had I adorned my nose with the spectacles of my grandfather and other old people! At once I clutched at these and put them on—I almost screamed, and I really cried out loud; for the governess was short-sighted, and I, for the first time in my life, could see! Instead of clambering upon chairs and other furniture to find out what the pictures had to tell, they were all made clear to me, as if by magic. Remarks which had so often puzzled me about minute and distant things became, with a sort of instinct, plain to my understanding. And from that time I have worn an eyeglass.

There would be little to interest in the picture I could paint of a decaying home, so in a few brief sentences, so far as private matters go, I will pass over these succeeding years.

I had to be taken away from school when still quite young, for the purse was emptying fast; then came some early struggles to cast about in what way to earn a living. I had been always 'stage-struck'—my toys were little theatres, in which the *Red Rover* and the *Miller and his Men* enjoyed very long runs; while, later on, I would for years read a tragedy in preference to a novel, until I learnt from my mother an adoration for the works of Dickens. All my pocket-money was spent at the play, and dramatic books (of which I was a great collector) became my hobby; but the thought of my ever being in truth an actor was looked upon with ridicule.

During my youth I went greatly to the play, and remember much that I saw. The first glimmer of recollection I retain of amusements is the circus at Astley's, and of pantomimes both there and at the Surrey Theatre. I recall, but only with a child's remembrance, being taken to the Lyceum to see the incomparable Madame

Vestris, and living in the fairyland of William Beverly's gorgeous scenery ; also to the Strand Theatre (then called Punch's Playhouse) to see that great actor, Farren, before he left the stage. The play was the *Vicar of Wakefield;* Mrs. Stirling was Olivia, and Leigh Murray also acted in it. Macready I never saw ; but I do not forget as a very small boy reading and devouring, with a longing to be present, the bill of his farewell performance. At the same age I can just remember seeing Old Madame Tussaud seated at the inner-door of the famous Waxwork Exhibition in Baker Street, and comparing the reality with the effigy. Later, for my mind retains much more, I was often at Sadler's Wells Theatre, and saw many of the Phelps' productions, several of them over and over again, and I witnessed most of Charles Kean's splendid revivals at the Princess's. At the Adelphi I saw Benjamin Webster, Leigh Murray, Paul Bedford, Miss Woolgar, and Madame Celeste, but—I can't say how it happened—never Wright.

My memory grows brighter at thoughts of the Olympic, where I was enthralled by an actor whom I shall never forget—Frederick Robson. I saw him very often, and vividly recall his pathos in the *Porter's Knot*, the intensity of his avarice as the old miser, Daddy Hardacre, and his wonderful acting in *Payable on Demand;* to have once seen is never to forget him as the distracted financier whose fortunes are saved by the news of Waterloo, brought to him by a carrier pigeon, which he ran round the stage embracing and covering with kisses in a way that provoked no smiles but only loud applause. The power of Robson's acting was as contagious as a fever.

At the Lyceum I recall Charles Dillon's fine performance in *Belphegor*. I sat that evening by my mother's side, and in the touching scene between the Mountebank and his son, we little thought that the pretty girl who made us cry by her pathetic acting as the boy Henri, in which she first appeared in London, would be my future wife. At the beginning of the new year I saw her for the second time as 'The little fairy at the bottom of the sea' in *Conrad and Medora*. Soon after at this theatre I also recollect seeing Helen Faucit (Lady Martin) act Lady Macbeth, and Pauline in the *Lady of Lyons*. These were the days when young theatre-goers had little ambition beyond a front seat in the pit : the days when one's toes were trodden on between the acts by horrible women who sold 'apples, oranges, and ginger-beer' : the days when the bill of the play was little better than a greasy mass of printer's ink on paper nearly two feet long.

Soon afterwards I went for a short visit to New York, partly with a dream of seeking a fortune there which I did not find. I sailed from England in September, 1858, and was thirteen days at sea—at that time an average passage, when the *Persia* was the 'greyhound of the Atlantic,' and the Cunard fleet composed of paddle-steamers only. I narrowly escaped taking my passage in the

Austria, which was burnt at sea: among those who perished, I remember, were several near relatives of Hermann Vezin.

Unfortunately I did not travel in the States, not even to Niagara. The New York of those days was very different from the city of to-day. Although, to my great regret (of that regret, and the reasons why Mrs. Bancroft and myself have never visited America professionally, more anon), I have only this early recollection of New York, I can tell of course from reading and conversation how wondrously it has changed, or rather grown, for when I was there the Central Park was quite a country outing.

My visit was during the fall, so I came in for the lovely Indian summer, a far more beautiful and much longer autumnal visitation than the French *L'Eté de la St. Martin*, or the short gleam we sometimes get in England, that is called St. Luke's little summer.

The strange, palatial, gliding ferry-boats, the tall, rough telegraph-posts which then crossed and recrossed the city, the many white houses with their green Venetian shutters, the brown-stone mansions of Fifth Avenue, are as vivid in my remembrance as the, then, terribly paved and dirty streets (only to be rivalled in discomfort, as far as my small travels go, by the filthy lanes of Constantinople).

My theatrical recollections of New York include, at Laura Keene's, the production of a play destined to attain celebrity as *Our American Cousin*, in which I saw Sothern act Lord Dundreary for the very first time in his life; and some years afterwards, when we first met at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, I gave him a copy of the original play-bill which I chanced to have kept. Jefferson, since world-famous as Rip Van Winkle, was the Asa Trenchard. The whole performance was a very different one from that presented later at the Haymarket; but, beyond all dispute, it was Dundreary who made the play, always a very bad one, although through Sothern it enjoyed the then greatest run on record. Sothern, at the reading of the piece, refused his part, and only on being given *carte blanche* to 'write it up' and do with it what he pleased, consented to appear in it. The odd stammer and eccentric walk which he introduced he had previously tried with success in small Canadian towns, where he began his Western career as Sir Frederick Blount in *Money;* its inspiration being really due to some funny antics of a nigger troupe known as Bryant's Minstrels. The long claret-coloured Noah's Ark coat which he wore on the first night he borrowed from Dion Boucicault, who was then acting at Niblo's; this dress was only once changed throughout the comedy, and then for a costume which would not have disgraced Wright in an old Adelphi farce—the coal-back whiskers were an exaggeration of the peg-top fashion then the rage, which also governed largely the cut of trousers and coat-sleeves. There was not for a long time any Brother Sam's letter or any allusion to that fraternal personage. The part grew slowly bit by bit, and instead

of being exaggerated into an impossibility, as it might have been by an inferior actor, was, in fact, refined nightly in action and costume with the judgment and painstaking labour which always characterized this admirable comedian, of whom I shall hope later on to speak.

At Wallack's Theatre I had the rare treat of seeing James Wallack—then a lame and crippled old man, but still very handsome—act as Don Cæsar de Bazan, also in Douglas Jerrold's *Rent Day*, and Shylock in a production of the *Merchant of Venice*, which followed on a smaller scale Charles Kean's revival at the Princess's. An amusing incident which occurred in the Trial Scene I fancy must have resulted from a practical joke played by some one behind the scenes. As Wallack came to the words, 'A harmless, necessary cat,' a large tabby, at first unseen by Shylock, marched upon the stage, to the dismay of the actors and the amusement of the audience ; chevied from side to side by Gratiano and Bassanio, still further frightened by the roars of the audience, the poor brute at length jumped in terror over the heads of the convulsed Council of Ten, and, with this splendid exit, ruined the rest of the play.

This short visit to the States came to an end soon afterwards. I can only hope it is still in store for me to go there again, and in maturer life become acquainted with America. On my return I saw too plainly that my mother's health was greatly broken ; she lingered some little time, but it soon grew evident that she would never recover.

I was present at the Princess's when Charles Kean retired from management. *Henry VIII.* was played, with Kean as Wolsey, and Mrs. Kean as Queen Katharine. The night was indeed one to well remember, as was the vast distinguished audience. Kean delivered a farewell managerial address, one point in which I can recall when he said how he had been blamed for mounting this or that play too sumptuously, while on the other hand he was recently scolded for the rudeness and simplicity of the goblets he had used in Macbeth's Banqueting Hall, adding in his own quaint manner, 'it was the first time he ever heard that Macbeth had an eye to King Duncan's plate.' The night was altogether memorable, and even the after-piece is worth recording, a farce written by Edmund Yates, called *If the Cap Fits*, acted by Walter Lacy, Frank Matthews, and Miss Julia Murray (now the wife of the distinguished reciter, Mr. Samuel Brandram), and last, and then least, for she was only a child, Miss Ellen Terry, who appeared as a dapper little tiger. Charles Kean's great services to the stage were publicly acknowledged at a banquet given in St. James's Hall, Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was at Eton with Kean, being among the speakers.

I mention my going at about this time to the Strand Theatre to see the burlesque on the *Lady of Lyons*, in which Charlotte Saunders

and John Clarke were so popular in their personations of the two Napoleons, because there was a little farce called *Captain Charlotte* played on the same night, in which I saw Marie Wilton for the third time (and never again until we met upon the stage); I have no better remembrance of that performance, I am ashamed to say, than the ungallant one of thinking her the thinnest girl I had ever seen.

The splendid performance of that fine actor, Benjamin Webster, in the *Dead Heart*, is vividly imprinted on my mind, as is also the *première* of the *Overland Route*, at the Haymarket; this comedy I witnessed several times—how amusing it was, and how well played by Charles Mathews and Buckstone, Compton and Chippendale, Mrs. Charles Mathews and Mrs. Wilkins. In the autumn of 1860, on one of the early nights of its brilliant career at the Adelphi, I remember my rapture at the *Colleen Bawn;* how well I recall the acting of Mr. and Mrs. Dion Boucicault as Myles-na-Coppaleen and Eily, of Miss Woolgar as Anne Chute, and Edmund Falconer as Danny Mann.

Without dwelling longer on these recollections, I will mention a very important night when I was among those who greeted that most famous of romantic actors, Charles Fechter, when he played *Ruy Blas* for the first time in English. This was followed soon by a revival of the *Corsican Brothers*, which I also saw produced. The first and second acts, I recollect, were then transposed, as they had been previously played by Fechter in France; the scenes in Paris, where Louis meets Chateau Renaud and is killed, preceding those at Fabian's home in Corsica, where he sees a vision of his brother's death.

These two delightful evenings shall close this hurried record; with them those early never-to-be forgotten visits to the play—those nights that were the balm for many sad and weary days—came for ever to an end. The charm, the mystery, which had hung for years around the playhouse, and chiefly made my dreams, were soon to be dispelled. 'The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,' were now to be revealed to me in all the barrenness of painted canvas; for, although in a very few days I was again in a theatre, I this time entered it by the stage-door.

CHAPTER V.

A COUNTRY ACTOR.

First engagement—Birmingham—Mr. Mercer Simpson—A varied répertoire—Madame Celeste—Walter Montgomery—A summer engagement—A trying journey—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean—G. V. Brooke—Lord Dundreary—Robson—Devonport—Imitation of Sothern—An offer from Dublin—Charles Mathews—A bad toothache—Compliment from Charles Kean—An anecdote—Kemble's pronunciation of Coriolanus—A lesson from Dion Boucicault—More hard work—Meeting with Sothern—Engagement at Liverpool—Alfred Wigan in Shakespeare—First meeting with Marie Wilton—John Hare's debut—Leigh Murray—The Davenport Brothers—First act with Marie Wilton—Meeting with H. J. Byron—Agreement to appear in London—Review of experience gained in the provinces.

OFTEN as I went to the play, dearly as I loved the theatre, until I was one I never knew an actor, and very rarely had even seen one off the stage.

I got my own engagement. After addressing a shoal of letters to the lessees of leading country theatres, to most of which I received no answers, Mr. Mercer Simpson, of Birmingham, found something in my appeal, I suppose, a little removed from the ruck of such effusions, for he sent me an encouraging reply, and expressed a wish to see me. I was then a rather good-looking boy of nineteen, but seemed older, with an odd mixture, I fancy, of modesty and courage in my nature. I left my home with a very heavy heart, and a very light purse, on the first of January, 1861. It was a wretched cold day when I walked up New Street to the Theatre Royal, and sent in my name to Mr. Mercer Simpson—whose friendship I still retain. I remember well my awe at finding myself, for the first time, 'behind the scenes,' and my impressions of the dimly-lighted theatre as I stood close to the footlights and talked my stage-struck project over, when, after kind advice, it was arranged that I might regard myself as a member of the company, with a commencing salary of one guinea a week. Upon this modest weekly stipend of twenty-one shillings I feel some pride in saying that I lived; for the expected return to town of 'Roscius,' ragged and repentant, was what was, naturally enough, looked for by those who knew my bent.

A few nights later I made my first appearance on any stage under a big mask, as a courtier in the pantomime; and then played my first part, that of Lieutenant Manley, in Bayle Bernard's drama of *St. Mary's Eve.* A copy of the first play-bill in which my name appeared is the only Birmingham announcement I possess; but I have a list of all the parts I played while in the provinces, and of the theatres in which I acted them. I greatly regret now that all efforts I have made to keep a diary were unavailing. During the

pantomime my work was not heavy. The opening plays were varied two or three times a week; a special 'blood-and-thunder' repertoire, comprising such works as the *Bottle*, the *Lonely Man of the Ocean*, *Susan Hopley*, and *Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life*, being drawn upon for Saturdays, in which I appeared as the perpetrator, or victim, of a wide range of the vilest crimes.

The first 'star' in the theatrical firmament round whom I humbly twinkled was Madame Celeste. I remember she was then spoken of as 'quite an old woman;' but, as she died twenty-two years later at the age of sixty-eight, I thought it a good instance of the rubbish so often circulated with regard to the ages of public characters. With this accomplished actress and charming woman I played in the old Adelphi dramas—the *Green Bushes* and the *Flowers of the Forest*. I next met poor Walter Montgomery, to my thinking an unappreciated actor, and perhaps a little too ambitious for his time. He was gifted with a remarkable memory, and was a reciter of marked excellence. He showed me many kindnesses, and took much interest in me then and afterwards. I often went to see him at the Hen and Chickens, in those days a celebrated old inn, but very likely now swept away, or eclipsed, by some company's palatial 'Limited' Hotel.

From the time I first appeared until the season ended in July, I played some thirty-six different parts; in many of them I must have been very bad, but I distinctly recall some small successes. The last 'star' that year was T. C. King, who was an excellent actor, but rarely seen in London; he took the Cork Theatre during the Birmingham vacation, and asked me to join him there at an advanced salary. A similar offer had been made to another member of the Birmingham company, who became my *compagnon de voyage*, and we started for our destination *viâ* Bristol, travelling there in a third-class carriage, for neither of us had money to spare on a more luxurious conveyance.

When the steamer sailed for Cork, I sat upon one of the paddle-boxes as we steamed down the river and under the suspension-bridge that I had known as a boy when it crossed the Thames by old Hungerford Market. With 'youth at the prow,' though hardly 'pleasure at the helm,' I still thought it all very jolly; but hardly had St. Vincent's Rock faded from view than rain fell, and things began to wear a less cheerful aspect. The vessel was laden with cattle, and, as we had only secured 'deck tickets,' I sought shelter in the fore-cabin; but got no further than the companion-ladder, where I was checked by clouds of bad tobacco-smoke and other fumes, the forbidding-looking hole being full of boisterous soldiers; so I retreated to the wet deck. I soon was sea-sick; wrapped in a travelling shawl, I crouched with my companion, very desolate and sorry for myself, in the most protected corner we could find. I don't know how long I remained in this miserable condition, but I was roused from it by a friendly voice saying, 'I say, youngster,

you don't seem used to this sort of thing. I'm the ship's carpenter, but have some duty to-night ; you'd better turn in to my bunk.' Had the good fellow offered me the ship's value it would not have been more welcome, and, in a few minutes, I was peacefully asleep in the humble berth of my good Samaritan.

During my short engagement of thirty-six nights at Cork I played forty fresh characters ; so had little time for anything but work, long hours of the night being often devoted to copying out my part from a well-thumbed book which had to be passed on to another member of the little company, while the days were spent in study and rehearsal ; for the performance was changed, or partly so, nearly every evening. It was reward enough, however, to know that the varied nature of the parts entrusted to me, and the incessant practice, did me great good ; for I felt already that I might some day be a fair actor, and so went back to Birmingham full of hope and high spirits.

It was at this time I first had the pleasure to meet Mr. Kendal, who was then a very fair and handsome young fellow of about nineteen. I dare say he will remember, as well as I do, a certain 'tea-fight' at my lodgings, when my guests far exceeded the number of my chairs. My landlady was a remarkable person in a way, and suffered from a kind of chronic influenza which pervaded the poor woman's existence ; for she had an extraordinary habit, when the attacks were at their worst, of entering articles of food in my little weekly bills, and the more extravagant accounts of other lodgers, in this fashion, possibly by way of provoking sympathy—'Broiled kidleys,' 'Milce pies,' 'Muttle chops,' 'Plack curralt jab,' 'Duck and greed Beas,' 'Sprig Chickel,' 'Maccarools.'

At the beginning of this season a ballet was produced, called the *Brigands of the Abruzzi*, in which I begged to be allowed to appear, thinking it would be good practice ; to my amazement I was given the part taken at Covent Garden by the celebrated pantomimist W. H. Payne. I have not the smallest doubt I made a frightful hash of it, but I am equally certain it was as fine a month's training as I ever had, in more ways than one.

I then met Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean ; which led to distinct advancement in the company and an increase of salary. I also played with two other then celebrated actors, Phelps and G. V. Brooke, whom I met at Birmingham for the first time, although the latter was but a wreck of former greatness. In *Othello* and in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, as Sir Giles Overreach, Brooke's acting was of the highest kind and quite remarkable. I distinctly remember being much impressed by the fact that in this part he wore the sword that once belonged to Edmund Kean. Before the season ended, during which I played sixty-four new parts, I had arranged to go for the summer weeks to Devonport ; and having a few spare days, I spent them in London to see the Exhibition of that year, 1862, and so renewed my acquaintance with Dundreary, a per-

formance which was then rapidly making Sothern's English reputation. I was also presented to the great-little Frederick Robson, whose son had recently joined the Birmingham company, and to whom I had been able to show some trifling kindness. When the boy took me to see his father, I remember, while we were looking at some framed theatrical engravings, Robson stopping before one of them and saying, 'That man was one of the cleverest and most natural comedians I ever saw.' It was the portrait of Pearce, the Christy Minstrel and original singer of 'Hoop-de-dooden-do.' The health of the great actor was already broken, for Robson died not very long afterwards, when only little over forty years of age. No words of mine could do justice to my remembrance of this actor and genius, who is said to have resembled Edmund Kean in his wondrous bursts of passion, while in his comic moments he recalled memories of the great comedians of the past. Off the stage Robson was one of the mildest and most unassuming of creatures in the world. The very nervousness which made him so shy and reserved in private life, perhaps, stood him in wonderful stead directly he trod the stage: he then became at will the hero of domestic drama, the mock tyrant of burlesque, or the most amusing caricature in the world of farce.

Young Robson and I journeyed down to Devonshire together, and during the pleasant six or seven weeks we passed there I acted all sorts of parts in nearly every kind of play, and was entrusted for the first time with a leading *rôle*, Captain Murphy Maguire in the *Serious Family;* among other important characters, I played Captain Hawkesley in *Still Waters Run Deep.*

In the company was an amusing man, whose festive temperament made him, I fear, a little unreliable in the wonderful dramas, often nautical, which were a feature on Saturday nights, although very often, I dare say, his own words were as good as the author's. Sometimes, however, he could remember none, and then, with amazing effrontery, took refuge in a stock speech, which he delivered with great solemnity to whoever might be on the stage with him at the time, no matter what the circumstances, the period, or the costume of the play chanced to be. Whether prince or peasant, virtuous or vicious, whether clad in sumptuous raiment or shivering in rags, it was all the same to him, and at the end of his harangue he stalked off the stage, leaving his unhappy comrade to get out of the difficulty as best he could, and bear the brunt of the position. These were the never-changing words, which I recall distinctly: 'Go to, thou weariest me. Take this well-filled purse, furnish thyself with richer habiliments, and join me at my mansion straight!' *Exit.*

The fame of Lord Dundreary was at this time at its height, owing to Sothern's great success, increased, no doubt, by the crowds who flocked to town to see the Exhibition. From my early remembrance of this 'creation' in America, and having recently renewed

my appreciation of its humour, I was able to imitate Sothern so closely in the character as to be thought quite remarkable. I was showing off this trick one night in Plymouth, when my manager, who was present, prevailed on me to give the imitation at the theatre, which had been but poorly attended during part of the summer season. I had the satisfaction, at least, of adding greatly to the receipts, for the house was nightly crammed until it closed, through my impertinence, of which the *Plymouth Telegraph* of September 6th, 1862, remarked : 'The principal attraction of the week has been the appearance of Lord Dundreary, who made his acquaintance with a Devonport audience under the most favourable circumstances. The lessee could, indeed, hardly have done better if he had engaged the original impersonator of his lordship, Mr. Sothern, for, by general consent, Mr. Bancroft has contrived to reproduce the character in facsimile ; and his Lord Dundreary is as much like the original in dress, manner, action, and appearance as it possibly could be, and has shown not only a wonderful amount of imitative talent, but an appreciation of character without which imitation would be mere mimicry, and which stamps him as an able actor.'

While at Devonport, I received an offer from John Harris, of the Dublin Theatre Royal, to join his company in a higher position to that I was about to resume at Birmingham. This offer, Mercer Simpson, always my friend, advised me to accept, even allowing me to fill up a brief interval between the two engagements in his theatre. So I acted there in revivals of *Macbeth* and *King John*, for which James Anderson, the tragedian, was engaged. Through watching his acting one night at the wing in the former character, I went straight upon the stage, dressed as Malcolm, for Macduff's great scene, and almost ruined it through having forgotten to remove my eye-glass.

The Dublin company was headed by dear old Granby, the stage-manager, an admirable actor of the old school ; early in the season we were made happy by a visit from Charles Mathews, who was accompanied by his former comrades Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews ; the trio played together in a round of their favourite plays, and the engagement was throughout delightful.

Acting for a month with this brilliant comedian could not fail to have some influence for the good on the efforts of an ambitious young actor, as I then was, and I felt deeply sorry when the curtain finally fell upon his stay. The mere mention of Charles Mathews's name fills the memory with a store of anecdotes about him ; most of them, no doubt, have long since appeared. One little one, however, I remember, which was told me at that time by Granby, who had been a member of his company when Mathews managed Covent Garden. I will venture to repeat it, having never seen it in print.

At the height of his troubles, when things went very badly, the

expenses of the vast theatre being ruinous, Mathews one morning saw a ballet-girl in a dark corner of the stage crying bitterly, and evidently in pain. The ever-gay comedian at once jauntily approached her (for nothing seemingly could dash his spirits), and said cheerily, 'What's the matter, my dear?' The girl sobbed in reply, 'Oh, Mr. Mathews, I am in such pain! I have got such a dreadful toothache!' 'Toothache!' said he; 'poor thing, I am so sorry. I'll let you off rehearsal; go and have the tooth out.' 'I can't, Mr. Mathews.' 'Can't, why not?' said he. 'I c-a-n't—aff-o-rd it,' blubbered the girl. 'Can't afford it! Nonsense!' answered Mathews; 'run round the corner to St. Martin's Lane, where you will get rid of it for a shilling.' 'But I haven't g-o-t a shilling, Mr. Mathews.' 'Not got a shilling?' he replied at once; 'neither have I. But come into the green-room, and I will take your tooth out myself!'

We then went from gay to grave, the Mathews month being followed by four weeks with the Keans.

I hope my vanity will be pardoned for relating an incident I remember after acting with them in *Much Ado about Nothing*. On the following evening I was seated in the green-room, when Charles Kean entered dressed as Othello. He sat down, and after staring at me some time in a way which rather frightened me, beckoned to me to go near him. I advanced, fearing I had innocently distressed him on the stage. To my great surprise he said, 'Sir, I was at the wing last night waiting to go on, and heard you give Borachio's difficult speech in the last act. I can only say that if I were still the lessee of a London theatre, it would be your own fault if you were not a member of my company.' I stammered out some words of thanks for this unexpected compliment, which was paid to me before a full green-room; fortunately I was 'called' almost directly for the stage, and so was able to beat a blushing retreat.

Kean, although at this time not quite fifty-two, had the appearance and manner of a much older man, and he was watched and guarded with what seemed unnecessary fuss by those around him. At rehearsal the green baize was laid down on the stage, the gas lighted, the stage enclosed—precautions which were taken for no other person. His memory was growing treacherous, especially in long soliloquies, as, for instance, the fall of Wolsey; either Cathcart or Everett would then be always at the wings to prompt him, while Mrs. Kean, ever the most devoted woman in the world, would hover round the scenes to stop the smallest noise. One night I witnessed a very comic incident, through her absolutely insisting on a member of the company, who was crossing the back of the stage on tip-toe, taking off his boots *because they creaked*, and continuing his journey to the stage-door in his stockinged feet.

Mrs. Kean was a most amiable and charming lady, but evidently, it seemed to me, now ill at ease in the parts she still played, such as Portia or Beatrice, although her perfect elocution and sweet

voice almost made you forget she was no longer young ; while, in spite of his failing health, there were moments of impetuous passion and wondrously effective rapid change of manner in Charles Kean's acting always to be remembered—notably in his scene with Tubal when he acted Shylock (said to be a reproduction of his father's method) ; in the third act of *Othello*, the close of *Richard the Third*, and throughout *Louis the Eleventh*. As a comedian he was also admirable ; witness his acting as Benedick, as Mr. Oakley, or as Mephistopheles. In venturing to give this opinion it may be worth while to recall Garrick's advice to Jack Bannister, when he said, 'You may humbug the town as a tragedian, but comedy is a serious thing, my boy, so don't try that just yet.'

Many are the stories of Kean ; most of them doubtless have been often told, but perhaps one or two have so far escaped record. He was, as has previously been mentioned, easily upset, when acting, by even a trifling noise. Years ago a habit prevailed in a seaport town he visited, among the occupants of the gallery of the theatre, of cracking nuts throughout the performance. This played havoc with Kean when he acted there. On the following morning he called those who travelled with him together, and, after loudly bewailing his sufferings and anathematizing the gallery boys, gave instructions to his followers to go into the town and buy up every nut within its walls, either in the shops or on the quays. This was done. The result for the two following evenings was perfect success, crowned by the chuckles of the tragedian ; but oh, the third night !

The fruiterers, perplexed by the sudden and unaccountable demand for nuts, had sent to Covent Garden and other sources for a plentiful supply to meet its hoped-for continuance ; the demand fell off, there was a glut in the local market, the nuts so deluged the town that they were sold more abundantly and cheaper than ever. Crack !—crack !—crack ! was the running fire throughout the succeeding performances, and the rest of Kean's engagement was fulfilled in torment.

At this time my first offer to join a London company reached me ; it came from Mr. Frank Matthews, who was about to undertake the management of the St. James's Theatre. After carefully thinking it over, I decided on having the advantage of more country practice, and declined the flattering proposal ; had I accepted it, I should have found my future wife a member of the company. Many good parts fell to my lot, both in dramas and old comedies ; the latter Granby greatly loved, his long acquaintance with them, and skill in their stage-management, being of great value to a young actor like myself. On a command night, given by the then Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Carlisle, we played *A Cure for the Heartache* and *To Parents and Guardians*. As the part of Monsieur Tourbillon, the old French usher, fell, to my amazement, to my lot, I could not complain of neglect in the way of variety.

At about Easter there was an annual amateur performance, which attracted great attention in Vice-Regal and garrison circles; through these I made the acquaintance, which has since ripened into friendship, of Mr. Walter Creyke, then Lord Carlisle's private secretary, and the Hon. Lewis Wingfield, both admirable amateurs.

This engagement was followed by Italian Opera, during which the dramatic company was sent *en masse* to Cork, to support G. V. Brooke, who acted sometimes during this engagement with much of his old fire. No man made himself more beloved by the companies he met. I and other youngsters at this time owed much to his kindness and hospitality.

There was comparatively little study during our stay at Cork, and we had many happy outings to Blarney Castle and the neighbourhood. Brooke went back with us to Dublin, and there acted for the first time the part of Coriolanus. He took enormous pains in the production, and his own acting was superb; but the play failed to attract. The title reminds me of an anecdote of days gone by, concerning its right pronunciation. Two theatre-goers were arguing in one of the old coffee-houses whether the hero should be called *Cor*iolanus or Co-*ri*-olanus. Each failed to convince the other, when some one in the room informed them that he chanced to know the tragedy would be acted at Covent Garden one evening in the following week. The disputants laid a wager, and decided to settle it by going to the theatre the night before, and accepting as final the pronunciation adopted by the actor who would, as was the custom in those days, 'give out' the performance for the following evening. News of the bet somehow reached the ears of John Kemble, and he himself came before the curtain and made the following speech: 'Ladies and gentlemen, to-morrow evening will be acted by his Majesty's servants, Shakespeare's tragedy Co-*ri*-olanus, in which your humble servant will have the honour to perform the part of *Cor*iolanus.'

At the close of the season (during which I had played sixty-four new parts and repeated many old ones) I was cast for Captain Thornton in *Rob Roy*, and when the information came to me I remember what I suffered, one great effect in the play being a broadsword combat between Thornton and the 'Dougal creature.' Although I fenced fairly well, and through long and careful rehearsal, at first with eyeglasses, had never come to grief, a fierce and much prolonged broadsword fight, with all sorts of strokes—some being made while turning round and with a crowded gallery on a Saturday night gloating over them all—was quite another matter. However, I said nothing of my fears; my brother actor was patient with my need of frequent practice, and all went fortunately and well. My dread, however, was so great that often later I have lost effective parts like Richmond sooner than run the risk of killing a tyrant king in earnest, through not seeing his majesty.

I then went for a month's special engagement to my old home in Birmingham, Mercer Simpson having asked me to play the Counsel for the Defence in Dion Boucicault's drama, *The Trial of Effie Deans*.

I only reached Birmingham a day before the play's production, so had but one rehearsal. The Counsel for the Defence, although appearing only in the trial scene, was a very important part, being played in London by the author himself. Of course I arrived quite perfect in the words ; but when I was half-way through the scene, Boucicault, who was on the stage, having travelled down from London specially, and whom I then met for the first time, came quietly to me and said, 'You are all wrong about this part, my dear fellow ; let me rehearse the rest of the scene for you. I can see your intelligence, and I fancy you will grasp my view of it directly.' I thanked him for his kindness, and after rehearsal went away to model my performance entirely upon his, for I saw at once how right he was, and how wrong I had been. The result was a considerable success on my part, the credit of which was chiefly due to one half-hour with Boucicault.

From Birmingham I went straight to Devonport, having arranged to again spend the summer weeks there. Among the company were Mrs. Robertson and her daughter Madge, then a young girl in her early teens, but already faintly foreshadowing the brilliant career and position she has enjoyed as Mrs. Kendal.

How happy one was in those days—or how happy one now thinks one was ! for the pleasures of life, I take it, are chiefly retrospective or anticipative, rarely actual. Anyway, I seem to remember that I had six weeks of very hard but pleasant work, studying thirty new more or less leading parts, and recovering many old ones ; leaping, perhaps on alternate nights, from John Mildmay in *Still Waters Run Deep*, to Fernando Villabella in Byron's burlesque of the *Maid and the Magpie*, or from Murphy Maguire to Beppo in *Fra Diavolo*. I also repeated the Dundreary imitation in a farce called *Sam's Arrival*, which had been acted at the Strand Theatre by a favourite actor, William Belford. Before reappearing in Dublin I paid a brief visit to London, when Walter Montgomery had a season at the Princess's Theatre, for which he made me an offer in the following way :

'9, Langham Street, *Friday afternoon*.

'DEAR BANCROFT,—'"I remember thee, and I remember thee well worthy of my praise." Come and join me at the Princess's, if only for a little time—open in Lorenzo (with such a pretty Jessica), and Christian in *Not a Bad Judge*. I am here every morning up to twelve. Come to-morrow and see me ; at least, I shall have the pleasure of shaking you by the hand. Come to me.—Yours very truly, WALTER MONTGOMERY.'

Although I did not entertain the offer, I stayed in London to be present at his performance of Shylock and Lavater.

The Dublin season commenced with the production of Edmund Falconer's drama *Peep-o'-Day*, chiefly acted by an organized travelling company. An old friend, Miss Cleveland (Mrs. Arthur Stirling), to whom I was indebted for much kindness in my early days at Birmingham, played the heroine, and I was the Captain Howard; my only remembrance of the part being the effort it cost me to learn the incidental Irish jig, which I eventually succeeded in accomplishing to the satisfaction of the 'Dublin boys.' A visit from Madame Celeste followed, and I then played leading parts with her and other celebrities.

Fortune was kind to me after this heavy strain of work, for it was followed by the engagement of Sothern, who then visited Ireland for the first time, and whose programme for a fortnight remained unchanged.

It was at this time I had the pleasure of giving Sothern the bill of his first appearance as Lord Dundreary, which I had treasured since its performance in New York, and which had now naturally grown to be very interesting to him. Sothern, who I suppose must have been afflicted with the mania that his true vocation was that of a serious actor, revived during this engagement a powerful but gloomy play called *Retribution*, which was originally acted at the Olympic by Alfred Wigan, George Vining, and the lovely Miss Herbert. I, by this time, had grown to the position of a local favourite, and achieved considerable success in the part of Oscar de Beaupré, quite as fine a character to act, I think, as the Count Priuli, which was played by Sothern.

One night when this drama was acted, Sothern's inability to control his suffering under the least inattention to his performance on the part of anyone among the audience met with a rebuff, which I cannot refrain from relating, although it tells against the actor. The play was dull, and going badly; the scanty attendance did not improve Sothern's temper, and he was greatly vexed by the chattering of two occupants of a large stage-box, who arrived late, and seemed more amused by the remembrance of their dinner than by his acting.

Towards the middle of the play one of the two men, who was a tremendous dandy, perhaps unthinkingly, and from mere boredom, quite turned his back upon the stage, and fixed his opera-glasses, with as much of his attention as at the moment he gave to anything, upon the audience. Sothern grew more and more angry. Soon the man in the box palpably yawned, looked at his watch, got up from his seat, reached down a large fur-lined overcoat, and in full view of the audience put it on. Sothern groaned. The prominent occupant of the box put away his glasses, loudly clicked the case in doing so, put them in his pocket, and then, with a bang, opened his opera-hat. Sothern could stand it no longer, and as his

innocent tormentor turned to leave the box he addressed him, 'Sir.' The heavy swell paused and looked calmly at Sothern, who, with a winning smile, said blandly, 'I beg your pardon, there is another act.' He got this answer : '*Ya-as, that is why I am going.*'

Although the public did not care for *Retribution*, the play was the means of Sothern interesting himself on my behalf, and being always my good friend. Presuming that I wanted eventually to get to London, he thought Dublin was too far off, across the 'streak of silver sea,' and advised me to get to Alexander Henderson's theatre in Liverpool, as the best stepping-stone.

More hard work, greatly to my advantage, followed, for G. V. Brooke succeeded Sothern, and on this visit I had the privilege of supporting him in all the second parts in the tragedies he played. The memory of then being brought so closely in association with poor Brooke is saddened by the thought that we never met again. A few years later came the sad death he met so nobly when he went down in the Bay of Biscay on board the *London*.

Gustavus Vaughan Brooke reminded me more than any actor whom I ever saw of Salvini. The Irishman, like the Italian, was gifted with a noble voice, and a natural dignity of bearing. His death in *Othello* always seemed to me as poetic in conception as it was pathetic in execution. Acting, although not speaking, the closing words, 'Killing myself, to die upon a kiss,' he staggered towards the bed, dying as he clutched the heavy curtains of it, which, giving way, fell upon his prostrate body as a kind of pall, disclosing, at the same time, the dead form of Desdemona.

My Dublin engagement was soon to come to an end, for I read of an approaching change in Liverpool, and, remembering Sothern's advice, I wrote at once to Mr. Henderson, who communicated with Sothern on the matter, and then telegraphed an acceptance of my proposal to join him at Easter-time. Until then I had a continued round of work, in plays which included an elaborate production of the *Ticket of Leave Man*, the scenery being specially painted by Hawes Craven, who was then the artist to the theatre, and whose work the Lyceum stage has since made known to the playgoing world.

I was given a part which was as great a surprise then, to me, as it may be to some of my readers to be told now, that of Bob Brierly, the Lancashire hero. Strange as it all seems now, I can truly say that no performance added so much to my Dublin reputation.

Lord Carlisle selected this year the *Heir at Law* for his command night, and as Dick Dowlas, before an audience adorned with all the show and glitter of uniforms and levee dress, the curtain fell upon my career in John Harris's beautiful theatre. Whatever that career may have been worth, however much or little I may yet know of my art, to the two long seasons of hard work I passed there I owe a large share of my success as an actor, and my stay in Dublin has a foremost place in my happiest remembrances.

When I first went to Liverpool I severely felt the contrast between the great Dublin theatre and the little house in Clayton Square, which, however, proved a fine field for practice, and I soon found myself at home, being heartily welcomed by Lionel Brough, who a short time previously had become an actor. I made my first appearance as the hero in Watts Phillips's play, *Paul's Return*, which had been produced in London at the Princess's Theatre. We were now on the eve of the Shakespearian Tercentenary, when the poet's memory was honoured by performances of his plays in nearly every English-speaking theatre. Alfred Wigan was specially engaged by Henderson to appear as Shylock and Hamlet. These performances, I feel bound to say, added nothing to the reputation of the accomplished comedian, which is best proved, perhaps, by their never having been repeated ; my own share in the production was a revival of Irish memories in the characters of Gratiano and Laertes.

I made many friends at Liverpool, and passed a happy time there. Among other frolics, which surviving companions will remember as well as myself, I recall frequent midnight drives, after acting in Liverpool, in a dog-cart from Birkenhead to Chester, a distance, if I remember rightly, of hard on twenty miles. How we risked our young necks, and what a life we led the toll-keepers and the slumbering villagers ! Well may one sigh and say with Robertson, 'O youth, youth ! priceless, inestimable treasure !'

The Pyne and Harrison Company being engaged to give a series of English Opera in Liverpool, Henderson arranged to go over to Dublin with the whole of his troupe for a month's starring engagement, and so I unexpectedly renewed for a brief time my acquaintance with many old friends. The remembrance of my services was shown by the warmth of the reception I received from the audience directly I stepped upon the stage, which was so prolonged as to bring the actors to the wings to see who could be the object of such an ovation. I look back with keen pleasure to that month, when, few rehearsals only being necessary, I saw for the first time the beauties of the county Wicklow ; for during my long stay in Dublin I had been far too busy to even think of getting further away from its streets than Sandymount. Just as a dweller in Westminster, living almost in the shadow of its towers, rarely enters the Abbey, until, perhaps, some country cousin comes to town to be shown the sights, I, during nearly two years' residence, saw scarcely anything, while in a month—being, so to speak, a visitor—I went everywhere.

At the close of our stay I remember the *Serious Family* was played for a benefit, when I had the impertinence to act Murphy Maguire (always a favourite part of mine), with an attempt at a brogue, before an Irish audience. We soon were back again in Liverpool, and during the summer the celebrated burlesque company from the Strand Theatre delighted Liverpool by acting for a short time there ; it was then that Marie Wilton and I first met.

It was here also that I commenced a friendship with one who, I think, can claim me now as his oldest professional comrade, John Hare. He was then a young fellow of twenty, and had come to Liverpool accompanied by that once brilliant actor, Leigh Murray, whose pupil he had been, to make his first appearance on the stage. The friendship between Hare and myself soon became close, and there are few remembrances keener in my mind than frequent visits to his rooms, where Leigh Murray stayed with him for a time, and who, although suffering severely from asthma and terribly crippled by rheumatism, was one of the most delightful companions I have known. His fund of anecdote and the graphic relation of his own experiences were almost lessons in acting, not likely to be forgotten by an enthusiast. Some three or four of us, whose names are now well known to theatre-goers, were listening to his pleasant talk one night, when I remember well his saying, 'And what may not you boys yet do upon the stage! You remind me of my own early days, now more than twenty years ago, when four young fellows, who were acting at Murray's old theatre in Edinburgh, used to chat over their future prospects, as you have been doing now. They were all youngsters then, much of an age and quite unknown; their names being Barry Sullivan, Lester Wallack, Leigh Murray, and Sims Reeves.' When Murray returned to London he and I kept up a regular correspondence. From a bundle of his interesting letters I select the following answer to a request that he would add his signature to an old photograph which I forwarded for the purpose:

'29, New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, *Dec.* 22, 1864.

'DEAR BANCROFT,—I have been, and am still, very ill indeed, and confined to my bed; but I hastily scratch a few lines to thank you very much for the budget of news, which, I assure you, alleviated the horrors of a particularly bad day. I cannot now attempt to reply beyond briefly reciprocating the good wishes usual at this "festive season." I hope I *may* have a "happy new year," but a merry Christmas" I cannot expect, for I fear I shall pass *the* day, as I have for the last four years, in bed! I sincerely hope you will enjoy yourself, as all good fellows should.

'I return the photograph of the faded comedian with the rheumatic autograph attached. I have passed the blotting-paper over the signature that the caligraphy may be as faint as the "counterfeit presentment" itself; too prophetic a significance of the fame and memory of him who now subscribes himself—Very faithfully yours, LEIGH MURRAY.'

We gave a strange performance next of a play which had attracted some attention at the Princess's Theatre—Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, with the Brothers Webb as the two Dromios. I played Antipholus of Syracuse, and Hare presented a very quaint figure as Dr. Pinch, a schoolmaster. The Webbs also acted in the

Courier of Lyons—Henry appearing as Dubosc, the villain, and Charles as Lesurques, who is innocently accused of the other's crime. I made some success in the part of Courriol, and Hare gave the first sign of his power in the art of making up in a small part of a very old man.

The notorious Davenport Brothers, fresh from their so-called spiritual manifestations in London, were at this period starting on a provincial tour, accompanied by a fellow-conjurer, called Fay, and 'Dr.' Ferguson, who acted in the capacity of lecturer. Henderson arranged to give a private *séance* in his rooms, and I was one of the invited. The 'manifestations' were certainly of the most bewildering kind, and the oily humbug of old Ferguson very calculated to deceive. The troupe appeared in public at St. George's Hall, where their mysterious cabinet, their ropes, their unseen music and vanishing hands, created great discussion; the trick of it all has long since been exposed and laid bare, among others, notably by Henry Irving, soon afterwards, at Manchester. But for their inference that they were indebted for their ends to spiritual means, all would have gone well; this the Lancashire boys would not stand, and set themselves to work to arrange such knots as no spirits could succeed in tying or untying. The end was rebellion and riot—the mysterious cabinet was smashed to fragments by some among the infuriated audience, who jumped upon the platform, while others pursued the wretched Davenports and their confederates, who with great difficulty escaped with their lives; they arrived torn and panting, all armed with revolvers, at the stage-door of the theatre while we were acting, seeking a refuge, which Henderson gave them, letting them out later by a private way to reach their lodgings and to catch the first departing train.

The occasion was taken advantage of by Henderson to produce an apropos sketch called the *Knotting'em Brothers*, Hare being marvellously made up to resemble one of the conjurers, while Blakeley was immensely amusing as a bewildered old gentleman.

Then came what was always pleasant to me, another meeting with Sothern, who appeared first in *David Garrick*. Blakeley, I recollect, played old Ingot; Lionel Brough, Squire Chevy; and Hare, the stuttering Mr. Jones. Sothern also acted, for the first time I think, Sir Charles Coldstream in *Used Up*, when Lydia Thompson, if my memory does not betray me, was the Mary, and I was cast for Ironbrace, the blacksmith. I also supported him in a new farce called *My own Victim*, which was a stupid affair, although written by Maddison Morton, and never afterwards revived. I faintly remember Sothern, with a padded wig which gave him a 'water-on-the-brain' appearance, offering everybody in the piece shrimps from a bag, and Hare darting in and out of doors as a little comic waiter.

A new comedy called the *Woman in Mauve*, and written by Watts Phillips, was got to work upon for a tentative performance.

It began well enough, and had amusing bits in it, but was not a good play. (The Liverpool verdict was very much endorsed in London, when Sothern tried it at the Haymarket.) Hare acted the ex-policeman afterwards taken by Compton. I recall an amusing incident. The leading characters in the second act were joining in the chorus to a song sung by Sothern, Hare beating time with a telescope, which he used throughout the play as a kind of memory of his former truncheon. One night the audience roared with laughter, louder and louder at each successive verse ; the actors doubled their exertions, Hare especially, who attributed part of their enjoyment to the vigorous use of his impromptu *bâton*—when Sothern, who was next to him, suddenly discovered that various articles of costume used by Hare as padding were, one by one, emerging from beneath his coat, and forming an eccentric-looking little heap upon the stage. The audience roared louder than ever, Hare beating time with renewed fierceness, when Sothern whispered, 'Never mind, old fellow ; don't take any notice ; don't look down !' Of course Hare did look down at once ; he saw what had happened, and bolted in confusion, leaving us to finish the scene as best we could without him.

I now come to a visit which was destined to greatly influence my future life, and renewed my acquaintance with Marie Wilton, who arrived to play a short starring engagement prior to becoming the manager of a London theatre, with Mr. Byron as her partner ; rumours to this effect having recently been theatrical gossip. Miss Wilton appeared in some of the famous Strand Theatre burlesques, also in Planché's charming comedy *Court Favour ;* in this piece she and I acted together for the first time, she as Lucy Morton, I as the Duke of Albemarle. My performance of this and of other parts (which Miss Wilton had seen as a spectator) led to the offer of an engagement from herself and Mr. Byron in their new enterprise, which I accepted. Having resisted several temptations to appear in London, including a proposal to join Fechter at the Lyceum, it may be thought unwise that I should have settled to go to a little obscure theatre, which was to be opened in a speculative way, with burlesque, at least until success in comedy should justify its abandonment, as the staple attraction ; with no better immediate prospect than a second-rate part in a comedietta, which must begin at half-past seven. All this, I own, may seem strange ; but the most prosaic of my readers will perhaps forgive some apparent want of sense, if I acknowledge a secret that I then did not dare confess even to myself. I was already a victim to an emotion which will be sung of by poets for ever, but which, after all, is told in four very simple English words—*love at first sight.*

The last stars with whom I acted as a member of Henderson's company were the Wigans, who added to their repertoire Lord Lytton's comedy *Money*, Captain Dudley Smooth being my farewell part as a country actor. Part of the cast, I think, deserves record-

ing. Alfred Evelyn was acted for the first time by Alfred Wigan ; Sir John Vesey was played by Blakeley ; Captain Dudley Smooth, as I have said, by myself ; Edward Saker was the Graves ; Lionel Brough the Stout ; and the irascible old member of the club, whose time is passed in calling for the snuff-box, was given to Hare ; Lady Franklin being played by Mrs. Alfred Wigan. For my share in this performance, as for many other early efforts in Liverpool, I was warmly praised and greatly encouraged in the local press by Mr. E. R. Russell, since M.P. for Glasgow.

My engagement then ended, and on the following day I went to London.

During this apprenticeship of four years and as many months I had attempted, no one knows better than myself how often inadequately, three hundred and forty-six parts. Of course I repeated many of those in standard plays, and some of them often, not only in different theatres, but with different actors (alone of the greatest service) ; an average, in fact, of between eighty and ninety parts each year, not counting short vacations—practice which no young actor in this or any other country can now obtain. The stock provincial companies, both here and abroad, are all dispersed, and the country theatres occupied by a perpetual succession of travelling troupes ; in which, it seems to me, the art of acting means but a parrot copy of the original in town. No question, therefore, is more difficult to answer than the one so often put—'How am I to become an actor?' But it is no more my wish or purpose to attempt an essay on the subject than it is to compare the advantages of the old days with what may be said in favour of the new. I have never yet made up my mind whether, fond as I was of my work, I had any particular what may be called 'vocation' for the stage, and certainly have never been so absurd as to imagine myself a heaven-born genius. I don't know how much of such success as an actor as I can lay claim to is due to qualities which would not have been thrown away in other callings ; but perhaps I may be forgiven if I choose myself to illustrate, as best I have the power, the result of the kind of work which I did in my youth. No actor, perhaps, has suffered in one way more than I have through having made some early success in a certain marked line of character, which, but for great efforts on my own part, I might have submitted to the doom of playing always. Long runs of successful plays, lasting for several years, made it very hard for both audiences and critics (especially as many people fostered the fable I never could account for, that my early manhood was passed in the mess-rooms of cavalry barracks instead of the drudgery of country theatres) to accept my humble efforts in parts other than those typical of military swelldom ; which gave me double work to secure what praise I have earned in subsequent performances.

Years ago, when first I played, for instance, Joseph Surface and Triplet, or, later on, Count Orloff in *Diplomacy*, such *power* as I

may have possessed to act those parts (my argument not being a question of physical adaptability) was at least quite as great, and, in proportion to the difficulty, much greater than the skill I may have shown in originating, as it were, a new type of swell, which has grown to the dignity of being described as a 'Bancroft part.' It may seem strange for me to speak thus of myself, and again I beg to be excused for doing so; but my early training permitted me to fill gaps, at least in a workmanlike way, in the casts of many and various plays, for which I never should have been suggested but by those who knew of and remembered it. I would cite, for instance, Joseph Surface, Tom Stylus, the Prince of Morocco (which, although a small part, dominates the scene for a sufficient time), Triplet, Sir George Ormond, Faulkland, and Count Orloff, characters all differing very widely from the modern swelldom of either Captain Hawtree or Jack Poyntz, and which may some day in the future encourage me to the study of still a different mould.

With these brief references to parts of which I hope further on to speak again, I leave my records of those early days, and presently shall come to matters more serious to my fate and future which followed when I found myself a London actor.

OUR JOINT NARRATIVE

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE OF WALES'S THEATRE, 1865-66.

How Mrs. Bancroft became manager of a London Theatre—Luck—The Queen's Theatre—Terms arrived at—A visit to the house—The company—The new name: Prince of Wales's Theatre—Letter from Lady Harrington—*A Winning Hazard*—A strange Incident—*La! Sonnambula!*—*Vandyke Brown*—*A Fair Pretender*—Byron's Comedy: *War to the Knife*—An eccentric hall-keeper—A Provincial Tour—The Second Season: *Naval Engagements*—Hare's first appearance—A new burlesque, *Lucia di Lammermoor;* and *A Lover by Proxy*—Tom Robertson and his comedy *Society*—*Little Don Giovanni*—*A Hundred Thousand Pounds*—A Vacation at Liverpool and Manchester—Sunshine and sorrow.

RESUMED BY MRS. BANCROFT.

I NOW come to the point where I have to tell how it came about that I was ever the manager of a London theatre. While greatly exercised in my mind with regard to the future, and very anxious to better my prospects, I one morning called, in a casual way, on my sister, Mrs. Francis Drake, and talked over my position, as I had often done before, for she and her husband knew well my anxiety to act comedy. *What* to do for the best, or *how* to do it, I could not imagine. My brother-in-law advised me to write to the leading managers, who then, it must be remembered, were few in number, and theatres where my services might be useful could be almost counted on the fingers of one hand, for an engagement to play comedy. I told him that I had done so several times, only to meet with refusals. Mr. Buckstone replied that if I would continue burlesque he would give me an engagement at once, as he could only associate me with 'the merry sauciness of that wicked little boy Cupid.' I was in despair, and did not know what to do. Mr. Drake, then, after a pause, said, 'I see no chance for you but management. How would it be if you had a theatre of your own?' A dead silence ensued. I looked at my sister, and she looked at me. My heart seemed to stop beating, and, like a lull after a storm, everything for the moment appeared to stand still. The mere thought of such a thing was bewildering. I could not realize the position, and thought I

must be dreaming. My sister, who was always sanguine about anything I undertook, said, 'Yes, that is what you must do.' I thought they were mad, and, after looking hard at them both to assure myself that they were not dangerous, I murmured, 'But the money! I can't take a theatre without money, and you know I haven't a penny in the world.' Mr. Drake answered, 'Come again to-morrow morning; in the meantime Emma and I will talk the matter over, and see what can be done.' What could they mean? All that night I dreamt of nothing but crowded houses, and money rolling in so fast that I couldn't hold it. The next day I kept my appointment to the moment, wondering what would be proposed. Mr. Drake said, 'I will lend you a thousand pounds if you can find a theatre to let for a time; should you succeed, you will return the money; if you fail, I will lose it. Should it prove a big success, you can pay a liberal interest, which I will give as a present to your mother.' My sister added laughingly, 'Come, Marie, don't be nervous; you are sure to succeed. Remember the old witch, who said that everything you undertake you are bound to prosper in. You are very lucky for others, why not try for yourself?'

Apropos of this remark, perhaps a little story which prompted it may be interesting. I give it for what it is worth. Years ago, one evening when my mother and I were chatting over the past, present, and future, she related to me an incident in which, although it occurred when I was only a few weeks old, I played the principal part. One night in a little out-of-the-way Yorkshire village, my mother was aroused by my crying and moaning; her efforts to soothe me were unavailing, and in the morning she found that my little body was completely covered with finger-and-thumb marks, as if I had been pinched. A doctor was sent for, but his prescriptions were useless. The next day an old peasant woman coming up the garden to sell her wares was attracted by my mother's sad face as she hushed me in her arms. 'What's t' matter wi' t' bairn?' she asked. My mother, who was little more than a girl herself, answered, 'My baby, I fear, is going to die;' upon which the old woman replied, 'Nay, nay, p'r'aps not; let's ha' a look at t' bairn.' When she saw the strange marks, she exclaimed, 'Don't ee cry no more, ma lass; gi' thanks, for t' bairn's bewitched!' 'What!' screamed my mother, nearly dropping me. 'T' bairn's bewitched, I tell thee; at sunset those marks will disappear, and 'twill be the luckiest bairn you ever know'd of: she'll tell o' things afore they come to pass, and bring good to them she wishes to, and woe to them as wrongs her.' The old woman seemed quite tragic for the moment, and begged for a scrap of my hair, saying, 'Put it into t' bairn's hand that *she* may gi' it to me hersen.'

The woman went away rejoicing, stopping to look back once or twice as she passed up the road. The marks disappeared as she had prophesied, for I need scarcely say my mother, being young and credulous, watched the clock and the departing sun. The

report spread quickly, for the next morning, and frequently until we went away, the village tradesfolk would call to kiss me, which they said would bring them a good day; and as they left the house would look with envy at my mother, and exclaim, 'Wonderful, missus!' (which expression has been for years a sort of joke in my family, and to this day when anything surprising occurs, it is met with the exclamation, 'Wonderful, missus!'). I can well remember when but a child being often asked to post letters which contained requests—the sender declaring they would then be surely granted. I have had little gifts simply to speak to tradespeople in their shops, and even now many with whom I deal avow that whenever I have called they have had 'a busy day.' My poor mother grew superstitious, she told me, from the moment the old woman's prophecy came true.

But to resume. Of course a thousand pounds at that time went further than that sum would now, and it seemed to me such a big fortune that all the theatres in London might be taken with it. Among other friends, I told my news to Mr. Byron, who I knew was about to sever his connection with the Strand Theatre. He thought it would be a very dangerous experiment, but I urged that if I failed, I should at least have the opportunity of showing the managers what I could do, and might afterwards have less difficulty in getting an engagement.

Being now quite resolved upon my speculation, I proposed a partnership, if a theatre could be found, Mr. Byron to give me his exclusive services as an author. As he was not in a position to provide money, he stipulated to be indemnified from sharing any losses that might occur. I felt that some such arrangement would greatly strengthen my position, knowing Mr. Byron's popularity, and his expressed willingness to write comedies. Then arose the difficulty where to find a suitable theatre? I talked over my project with Mr. A. C. Troughton, who had been so pleased with my performance in his comedietta, *Unlimited Confidence*, and from him I learnt that the Queen's Theatre, in Tottenham Street, was in the market. We made inquiries, and were told that it was *not* to let, but that an arrangement might be made with Mr. James, the lessee.

This theatre had gone through strange and varied fortunes, and had been known by many names since its title 'The King's Concert Rooms,' when first built by Signor Pasquale, the father of the once celebrated singer. Among its former lessees was Mr. Brunton, the father of the celebrated Mrs. Yates, the mother of Edmund Yates. The beautiful Mrs. Nisbett also once held the reins, while Madame Vestris and Madame Celeste were frequent stars there; it having, besides, been the first English home of the French plays, and there the great Frédéric Lemaître first acted in this country. But, in spite of such attractions, it then knew little else than evil days, and for many years had become again quite a minor theatre.

I was implored by everyone I consulted to reflect before entering upon such an enterprise. 'The neighbourhood was awful,' 'The distance too great from the fashionable world,' and 'Nothing would ever make it a high-class theatre.' People shrugged their shoulders, and I could see that failure was foretold in every feature. So I stood alone, without one word of encouragement. Mr. Byron grew less sanguine, and entreated me, before proceeding further, to go with him and talk the matter over with an old and valued friend of his (and since of mine), Mr. J. M. Levy, whose sound practical judgment and kindly feeling we might rely on. I told my story, Mr. Levy seemed pleased with my courage, and was altogether favourably inclined towards the undertaking. He thought, at the same time, it would be wise for me to appear in burlesque, for at least the start, and not to risk losing that following of the public which had been accustomed to see me in that class of play. He suggested that Mr. Byron might then write a comedy, and give me the opportunity I sought, and, if successful, I could gradually abandon burlesque altogether.

I went home determined to follow this good advice, and invented for my managerial motto, '*Du courage et de la bonne humeur.*' An arrangement was entered into with Mr. James for a period of two years, to commence at Easter, by the terms of which he was to receive twenty pounds a week for rental, and his services as acting-manager combined; while Mr. Byron and myself were each to draw a weekly salary of ten pounds, and I was to receive an additional ten pounds a week towards the repayment of the sum to be advanced. After these deductions we were jointly to share all profits. Mr. Drake introduced me to the London and Westminster Bank, St. James's Square, on January 21st, 1865, when an account was opened in my name, with the sum he had agreed to advance. The formal receipt for the thousand pounds (which was returned to me when I had repaid the money) bears the same date.

The text of the document I signed indemnifying Mr. Byron from all pecuniary risk (which will be further alluded to when our story reaches the dissolution of partnership between Mr. Byron and myself), was as follows: 'In consideration of one thousand pounds advanced by me for preliminary and after expenses attending the decorating, advertising, payment of salaries, etc., of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, I am to receive ten pounds a week for two years, in addition to a salary which will be equal to yours. By this arrangement the thousand pounds will be paid me back by the end of the second year; this sum of ten pounds to come out of the profits of the theatre; should the weekly receipts fall below the expenses, the ten pounds to be paid out of the previous profits, so long as there are any to draw upon. At the end of our tenancy, should the thousand pounds be lost, or any portion thereof, I am not to have any claim on you for said sum, as the venturing of the money is voluntary on my part. Your salary is to be the same as

mine in consideration of your joint management, stage managerial duties, and writing of pieces. All publishing and acting rights of our pieces being jointly my property with you, during our management. All money taken at the theatre is to be banked in our joint names, and to be our joint property.' We then began our operations, and the days were taken up in preparing for our venture. One night, while the old Queen's was still in existence, Mr. and Mrs. Byron and myself occupied a private box, and saw the performance. It was a well-conducted, clean little house, but oh, the audience! My heart sank! Some of the occupants of the stalls (the price of admission was, I think, a shilling) were engaged between the acts in devouring oranges (their faces being buried in them), and drinking ginger-beer. Babies were being rocked to sleep, or smacked to be quiet, which proceeding, in many cases, had an opposite effect! A woman looked up to our box, and seeing us staring aghast, with, I suppose, an expression of horror upon my face, first of all 'took a sight' at us, and then shouted, 'Now, then, you three stuck-up ones, come out o' that, or I'll send this 'ere orange at your 'eds.' Mr. Byron went to the back of the box and laughed until we thought he would be ill. He said my face was a study. 'Oh, Byron?' I exclaimed, 'do you think that people from the West End will ever come into those seats?' 'No,' he replied, 'not *those* seats.' Of course he made jokes the whole evening. One woman in the stalls called out to another, 'I say, Mrs. Grove, 'ere's one for you,' at the same moment throwing a big orange, upon which Mr. Byron remarked, 'Nice woman, Mrs. Grove. *Orange Grove!*' I think, if I could, I would have at that moment retired from my bargain, but the deed was done, and there was no going back from it.

We had possession of the theatre for a month, during which brief time it had to be taken very much to pieces, cleaned, painted, re-seated, re-decorated, furnished, and it was not pleasant to see the money gradually getting less and less, for the bills were paid every week. Mr. James was very kind, and helped me to go about everything as cheaply as possible; and when he came every Saturday with bills to be paid, or sums advanced to the builder and decorator, the upholsterer, or the gas-fitter, he would say, in his peculiar falsetto voice, 'The poor thousand pounds is becoming smaller by degrees, and beautifully less.' By the time the theatre opened I had about £150 left.

We had an excellent working company—all of whom, of course, in those days had very modest salaries—the most prominent being my old friend Mr. John Clarke, Mr. Dewar (who was the stage-manager), Mr. Montgomery, and Mr. Bancroft (who then had never acted in London, and who from these early days gave me the advantage of his help and counsel), Miss Fanny Josephs, Miss Goodall, Miss Lavine, two of my sisters, and myself.

Agreeing with my wish to re-christen the theatre, which in its long career had borne so many titles, Mr. Byron applied for per-

mission to call it by the name which I myself had chosen. His Royal Highness graciously consented in the terms of the following letter:

'Lord Chamberlain's Office, St. James's Palace, *Feb.* 3, 1865.

'SIR,—I am desired by the Lord Chamberlain to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ult., requesting jointly with Miss Marie Wilton, as lessees of the *Queen's Theatre*, in Tottenham Street, that the name of that building may in future be the *Prince of Wales's Theatre;* and I am to inform you, in reply, that his lordship accedes with pleasure to your request, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales having signified his consent to the proposed change.—I am, sir, your obedient servant, SPENCER PONSONBY.

'Henry J. Byron, Esq.'

When the speculation was really resolved upon, among the first friends I told of it was one who for years had been so kind to me, and who had shown such interest in my welfare—Lady Harrington. As one, at least, of many letters to me should have a place in this book, I will choose her reference to my important undertaking:

'Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, *Feb.* 18, 1865.

'MY DEAR EFFIE,—I was told of a little paragraph in the newspapers about your having taken a theatre, but not having heard of it from *you*, I did not believe the report. I need scarcely assure you of my sincere good wishes for your success, and I am delighted to hear that you are to have the kind and friendly support of your sister's husband in your undertaking.

'I remember the little *Queen's Theatre* years and years ago, when I resided near Russell Square.

'It is a great card having secured Mr. Byron to yourself; I have just read his clever and entertaining novel with great enjoyment. Since the last week of November, when I saw you at the little Strand, I have not been to a theatre, except to one morning performance of the Covent Garden pantomime to take my dear grandchildren, as after my attack of bronchitis I am obliged to be very careful about going out in the evening. I shall hope soon to be able to take a peep at you, dear wee manageress, when you are on your throne at your royal domain; till when and ever,—I am, your very affectionate friend, MARIA HARRINGTON.'

Mr. Wooler, a well-known writer of comediettas, sent me a one-act play, entitled *All's Fair in Love and War*, to read, which I thought just suited for a *lever de rideau*. Mr. Byron and I agreed to accept it, but suggested changing the title, which we thought too long, Byron remarking that 'it would require two play-bills to show it!' Mr. Wooler re-christened his piece *A Winning Hazard;* the strangeness of the coincidence did not at the time strike me, but afterwards, when our success seemed assured, we laughingly re-

marked that it was, to say the least, a curious incident that the curtain should rise on my venture with those words.

Mr. Wooler was a most eccentric man, and formed strong likes and dislikes, which he was at no pains to disguise. One morning, as he entered the theatre to attend a rehearsal of his little play, he encountered a member of the company towards whom his feelings were the reverse of amiable ; as they passed they saluted one another, and Mr. Wooler gruffly muttered, 'How do you do?' The other responded. 'Quite well, thank you ;' upon which Mr. Wooler said, quickly, 'Oh, don't thank me ! I don't care how you are ; I only asked for form's sake.'

When my little company first met for rehearsals I noticed a changed manner in several of my brother and sister artists. Because I was a manager they appeared to expect that I should be different towards them. I begged them not to think this, and asked for their good wishes and kindly help, assuring them that although I now held the reins, they would find I should never cease to consider them my good friends, and that we should all drive abreast, not one before the other. Throughout the whole of my twenty years' management I hope I kept my word. Well, the opening night was fast approaching, and my work was very hard. Day after day I was in the theatre from ten in the morning until late at night, eating when I could, for I had rehearsals to attend, to direct the dresses for the new burlesque which had been written for the opening, to look after the painters and decorators, and to study my own part ; so it may be believed that I had enough to do, and became more and more anxious as the eventful night approached.

When Mr. Byron read his burlesque, a member of the company, who I then met for the first time, was present, and during the reading I observed that about every three or four seconds he distinctly winked ; after this had been going on for some time I began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable. At last I left the room, and called Byron out ; he saw that I was very much annoyed, and I immediately told him that I was sure Mr. ——'s conduct had been, all through the reading, abominably rude. Byron asked me what he had done. I explained that the actor had done nothing but wink at other members of the company : that I bore it as long as I could, but when he deliberately looked at me and winked *vigorously*, I could stand it no longer. I continued : 'He must not remain in the theatre ! I won't allow him to act ! Give the part to some one else. He is the most impertinent fellow I ever met ! Wherever did he come from ? *Do* send him away, Byron !' Byron went off into a fit of laughter, and then explained to me that it was a nervous affection of the eye, which had, he said, a very funny effect on the stage, in comic parts. I gradually became accustomed to this curious affection, but I shall certainly never forget the first impression it made upon me.

I will here relate a strange incident which occurred on the afternoon of the opening night; it will interest the superstitious, and amuse the sceptic. My mother, who was almost prostrate with nervousness, would not go to the theatre on the first night; but my father, I am glad to say, was present. My sister, Mrs. Drake, proposed to take my mother for a country drive to distract her thoughts; so they went into the neighbourhood of Willesden. My sister talked about all sorts of things, but to no purpose; she could see that my mother's thoughts were with me in Tottenham Street. At last, failing to secure her attention, Mrs. Drake turned the subject of conversation to me, which seemed to please her. 'Mary has always been fortunate,' my mother said (although I was christened Marie Effie, she loved the name of Mary, and always called me by it); 'but her luck may desert her in this enterprise; she is so venturesome, poor girl! What would I not give to know the end of this undertaking!'

She raised her eyes, and there, on a direction-stone, as they turned a corner in the road, she saw, '*Mary's Place, Fortune Gate.*' It was to my mother like an answer to her wish, and impressed her so much that she afterwards often spoke of it. Curiosity took me to the neighbourhood later on, where I saw and read the kindly and prophetic words, which, I believe, may still be found there.* This was only a strange coincidence, but I fancy it is worth the telling.

The hour for launching the little ship arrived; of course there was a great crowd outside the theatre, and the inhabitants of Tottenham Street had, doubtless, never seen such a display of carriages before. The public, who were anxiously waiting for the doors to open, little knew that, but five minutes before they entered, I was standing on a high stool in a private box nailing up the last lace curtain. The house looked very pretty, and, although everything was done inexpensively, had a bright and bonnie appearance, and I felt proud of it. Curtains, carpets, in fact all the appointments, were of the cheapest kind, but in good taste. The stalls were also blue, with white lace antimacassars over them. This was the first time such things had ever been seen in a theatre.

The first programme I offered the public in my new capacity was dated Saturday, April 15, 1865, and comprised *A Winning Hazard*, written by J. P. Wooler, which was acted by Mr. Dyas, Mr. F. Dewar, and Mr. Bancroft: it being his first appearance in London. The ladies engaged in the little piece were Miss L. Hastings and Miss B. Goodall.

After this was played a new and original operatic burlesque extravaganza, entitled *La! Sonnambula! or, the Supper, the Sleeper, and the Merry Swiss Boy.* Being a passage in the life of a famous 'Woman in White;' a passage leading to a tip-top story, told in this instance by Henry J. Byron.

* Since the early editions of this book appeared, the stone has been removed, and given to Mrs. Bancroft.

The farce of *Vandyke Brown*, in which John Clarke played the principal part, wound up the evening.

I remarked to Mr. Byron, just before the doors were opened, 'I am glad I chose pale blue for the prevailing colour; it looks pretty, don't you think so?' He answered, 'Yes; let us hope we shall not, by-and-by, look pale blue too; *that* wouldn't be pretty.'

When I began to dress I was almost too tired to stand, for I had been all day looking after everything and everybody. However, as the moment approached for my first appearance as a manager, the excitement roused me; and when my cue came, I went on to my own little stage without exhibiting any sign of fatigue. It would be affectation to pretend that I did not know I was already a great favourite with the public, although the warm welcome I received almost overpowered me, but soon added force to my acting.

Byron was full of congratulations after my first scene, and, even in the midst of such excitement, could not resist making a joke. When I hurriedly asked him what the audience thought of the appearance of the theatre, he replied, 'Everybody is delighted. Some charming people in the stalls; a very nice Scotch family in the front row. I don't know them, but I'm sure they are Scotch.' 'How?' I asked. 'Because I heard a lady say, "Oh! there's *Aunti Mac-Assar!*"'

After it was all over several well-wishers came round to congratulate me, and while this was going on, the first night's receipts were handed to me. I never before had held so much money in my hands all at once, and what to do with it I did not know. Mr. Byron had just gone, and had forgotten to give me any directions about it. I dared not take the money home; I felt sure that robbers would come in and steal it in the night! At length a mutual friend, Mr. Albert Levy, who will well remember the circumstance, volunteered to take charge of it. I gratefully accepted the proposal, and handed him the money, wrapped in a silk handkerchief, which was returned on Monday and banked—the money, not the handkerchief—by Mr. Byron. When I was leaving the theatre to go home, there was a woman with a basket of oranges still standing outside, who, when she saw me, exclaimed, 'Well, if these is your haristocrats, give me the roughs, for I've only took fourpence!'

So commenced my management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre. I have tried to tell *why* I became a manager, and *how*. Let me add that not one shilling further was ever borrowed by me from, or given to me by, anyone living or dead in connection with this enterprise. I was successful in a modest way from the very first, and gradually, but surely, my lucky star led me on to fortune.

An alarming bit of news was given to me some days after the opening of the theatre, which had been kept from me at the time, and which very few people knew of. Just before the first performance began, a large bundle of shavings which had not been removed

was discovered to be on fire underneath the pit. Happily it was seen in time, and the fire extinguished, or the consequences might have been terrible. The cause of the accident was never found out.

Mr. Wooler, the author of the little opening play, came into the green-room one night to express his delight at the successful start of the theatre ; he had been dining out, I fancy, for he appeared to be not quite himself (not an unusual occurrence with poor Mr. Wooler !), and he remarked that he liked everything but the first piece, which he condemned as 'rubbish.' The poor gentleman, having changed the title in a hurry, had forgotten that he was its author, and remarked, 'You should have accepted *All's Fair in Love and War*, a much better play.' After he left I related the little scene to Byron, who was immensely amused : I said, 'Ah, well, he was full of congratulations !' to which Byron replied, 'Full of congratulations ! I thought it was liquor !'

I had made a promise to my dear old friend Palgrave Simpson to produce a comic drama of his, called *A Fair Pretender*, which in May commenced the programme, *A Winning Hazard* being acted last, the burlesque still keeping its place.

Mr. Simpson's play was in two acts, and was acted by Mr. Clarke, Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Montgomery, Mrs. Saville, and myself. It was only played until Mr. Byron, true to his word, finished a comedy, which was produced on June 10 ; I had a good part to play : at last the long-wished for chance arrived, and I was happy. The piece was clever and amusing, and a distinct success. It was called *War to the Knife*, and was cast as follows : Mr. Harcourt, Mr. H. W. Montgomery ; Captain Thistleton, Mr. Bancroft ; John Blunt, Mr. F. Dewar ; Mr. Nubbly, Mr. J. Clarke ; Sharpus, Mr. Tindale ; Mrs. Harcourt, Miss Fanny Josephs ; Mrs. Delacour, Miss Marie Wilton ; Penson, Miss Lavine ; Jane Trimmer, Miss Blanche Wilton.

During the evening I remember Byron coming to me and asking if I would suggest to Mr. Montgomery, who was a very tall man with a long neck, to wear a 'stick-up' instead of a 'turn-down' collar ; adding, in his quaint way, 'That neck of his, you know, is such a nuisance ; any neck after eight inches becomes monotonous.' I must not omit to say that from the time I opened the theatre, I placed (besides the ten pounds a week I have alluded to) such sums of money as I could spare towards the payment of my debt to Mr. Drake, for I was more than anxious to restore to him what then seemed to me a gigantic sum. I allowed myself very little to live upon, and, as I could afford no luxury in the way of dress, I went into complimentary mourning for economy's sake—a coloured dress was always recognisable, a black one never.

My dressing-room at the Prince of Wales's Theatre was originally close to the stage-door, and I could easily hear all that was going on there. The hall-keeper, who was a most eccentric character, named Kirby, and at the same time a very excellent

servant, would always carry out his orders in a conscientious manner. The carpenters were often sadly neglectful in wiping their feet as they passed through the hall to the stage, and as there was a huge mat placed for that purpose, Kirby was instructed to insist upon their doing so. He had a habit of singing to himself a great deal, and would often intersperse his dialogue with the words of some favourite song. While dressing one night I overheard the following scraps of conversation, Kirby speaking always in a sleepy, drawling voice :

1ST CARPENTER : 'Cold night, Kirby, ain't it?'

KIRBY : 'Hawful cold' (*'I'm sitting on the stile, Marce'*). 'Wipe your feet.'

2ND CARPENTER : ''Ow are yer, Kirby?'

KIRBY : 'All right, George' (*'Where we sat side by side'*). 'Wipe your feet, George.'

3RD CARPENTER : ''Ave you got change for sixpence, Kirby?'

KIRBY : 'No, I *h*ain't' (*'The night you promised long ago'*). 'Wipe your feet.'

4TH CARPENTER : Wet night, Kirby; kind o' weather wot will bring up the vegetables and everythink.'

KIRBY : ',I 'ope it won't bring up my three wives' (*'You said you'd be my bride'*). 'Wipe your feet, 'Arry.'

I have little else to tell of this short opening season, which ended on August 5th. We then all went for a provincial tour—which was fairly successful—with our two principal pieces, *War to the Knife* and *La! Sonnambula!* playing at Liverpool for three weeks, at Bath and Bristol for a fortnight, and at Exeter for six nights. I look back pleasantly to the happy days passed during that last week at Dawlish, which was all the holiday I could snatch, for directly we returned to town it was to resume work.

NOTE BY MR. BANCROFT.

The story of the opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and how its new existence came about, belongs so much more to Mrs. Bancroft than to me, that I need only briefly add my own and individual experiences of early days there.

On the day I went to my first rehearsal of the opening play, I walked from one end of Tottenham Court Road to the other, but could neither find nor hear of any such building as the Prince of Wales's Theatre. At last it struck me that in the neighbourhood the little play-house would still, of course, be better known as the Queen's, if not by its unsavoury nickname, the 'Dust-hole,' which, later on, was more euphoniously called 'Gold-dust Hole.' I had no more difficulty, and reached my destination then quite easily. All was in confusion; the front of the house being still in the hands of its decorators and furnishers, the stage given up to carpenters and the artist for his scenery. However, after I had been warmly welcomed, a part of it was cleared and we got to work; the little play was very simple, and gave no trouble to its interpreters.

On the Friday night after the final rehearsal, I was taken by John Clarke to a supper-party at Charles Millward's house, where I met for the first time Tom Hood, Jeff Prowse, Arthur Sketchley, John Brough, Henry Leigh, George Grossmith (*père*), Andrew Halliday, Artemus Ward, and one who very soon was to influence my career —Thomas William Robertson. How bright and cheery he was that evening—although his life, at the time, was a hard one.

I was not yet quite twenty-four, and my introduction to these, and other such men, filled me with happiness, and opened, as it were, the doors to a companionship with the lights which then illumined that happy world—Bohemia! It is sad to check the bright thoughts recalled by the names I have mentioned, for as I write there rises the remembrance that the host alone survives; all the others, many of them quite in early manhood, have long since gone to the Shadowed Valley. But what memories of their wit, their charm, their humour, the mere mention of their names, even by so feeble a pen as mine, and even in this hurrying world where to die is so soon to be forgotten, will summon still to those of us who knew them!

During the season I was asked by Miss Lydia Thompson, who was acting then at Drury Lane, if I would play there for her benefit in *My Aunt's Advice*, with Sothern and herself. Of course I was delighted, not only to be of such small service to her, but at the opportunity of showing myself upon another stage, and in a part in which I had before supported Sothern, and felt at home.

In June I had my first chance in Byron's comedy, *War to the Knife*. I was cast for a sort of man about town—one Captain Thistleton—and to that character I certainly am indebted for the opportunity of gaining some notice from the critics and the public, so adding to the chance of my later efforts being watched.

RESUMED BY MRS. BANCROFT.

Our second season commenced on Monday, September 25th, 1865, when Mr. Hare, and that admirable actress, Miss Larkin, both of whom I had seen and admired in Liverpool, now joined the company and made their first appearances in London. The opening programme comprised *Naval Engagements*, which was played by Mr. J. W. Ray, an excellent actor of old men, and long a prominent member of Mr. Phelps's company at Sadler's Wells; Mr. Dewar, Mr. Montgomery, and Mr. Hare; Miss Larkin, and Miss Fanny Josephs. This was followed by a new burlesque, by Mr. Byron, called *Lucia di Lammermoor; or, the Laird, the Lady, and the Lover*, after which Dion Boucicault's farce, *A Lover by Proxy*, was played, in which Mr. Bancroft took the principal part.

Mr. Hare's subsequent career encourages me to refer further to his *début* as the Landlord Short, in *Naval Engagements*. Mr. Byron, as usual would drag in a joke, and at rehearsal one day remarked to him, 'So wise to appear first of all in a part suited to

you. Short figure, short name, short part; the critics will say, "Mr. Hare, a clever young actor, made his first bow to a London audience, and was most excellent; in Short, perfect."' 'Yes,' said Mr. Hare: 'but what will happen if they don't like me?' 'We'll rechristen the piece "SHORT *Engagements*."' Fortunately for him, and for us, Mr. Hare's subsequent brilliant successes have more than justified my choice of him as a young recruit. Two other funny remarks apropos of this programme I recall. On the first night of the new burlesque, 'little' Clarke, as usual playing the heroine, Lucia, came exultingly into the green-room, and said to the author, 'I had such a reception! did you hear the cheer?' 'Plainly,' said Byron, '*Lu-cheer*.'

I remember the shouts of laughter provoked by the following nonsense rhymes, which were admirably sung by Mr. Montgomery, as the old pedagogue:

'Tityre tu patulæ requiescat in pace for five form a quorum,
As in præsenti et arma virumque cano, likewise pons asinorum,
Emollet mores nec sinit esse feros,
Et tu Brute ut sunt Divorum;
Oh, populi vox; and also atra nox,
Keemo kimo, et Hi Cockolorum!'

At one of the rehearsals of the same piece, Mr. Dewar had to say, 'I give up my claim and waive my title' (retiring with the words up the stage). After remaining there some time, he called out to Byron, 'I'm a long while up here with nothing to say. What am I supposed to be doing?' He was immediately answered, 'My dear fellow, you are *Waiving your Title!*'

It may be a good opportunity to follow up these anecdotes by saying that during my early management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and when it had but recently been so christened, I got into a hansom one evening, and hurriedly directed the cabman to drive to 'The Prince of Wales's.' My thoughts at the time were much occupied by the early production of our first comedy; I was in a nervous state, anxious and worried, hardly noticing the route my cabman took, when suddenly he stopped. I then asked him in an impatient manner why he did so. 'Didn't you want to be drove to the Prince of Wales's?' I answered 'Yes.' 'Well,' he said, 'here you are.' The man had pulled up at Marlborough House!

While on the subject of cabmen I think I may tell another incident which happened on a terribly wet night, and when I had been detained at the theatre somewhat late. I ordered a four-wheeled cab, and directed the driver to my home. We had no sooner started than I found that the poor horse could scarcely crawl. The cab was a wretched broken-down thing, and I should not have been surprised if the bottom had come away, leaving me to run with the rest of it, for the man was deaf, and shouts would have been unavailing. The horse was rickety, too, but showed a desire

to do his best, poor creature, for he worked his legs in an odd way as if they were being pulled by strings, hoping he was making some progress, but he was not. The man, who was much older than the cab and horse combined, was not only deaf, but surely blind, for he took me down strange, narrow, dirty-looking streets and the veriest roundabout way, which made me fear that I should never get home. He did nothing but tug, tug, tug at the veteran horse's toothless mouth, which had no effect, except to send him off into jumping action again. I began to feel very anxious, so I opened one of the windows and called out, 'Man, man!' He took no notice. Then I tried a push with my umbrella; he mumbled something and went on into another dark, dismal street, of which I had no remembrance. I could not imagine where he was going to take me. Again I opened the window. 'Man, man!' No answer. I was obliged to have recourse to my umbrella once more. He growled out, 'Yes, yes; all right.' I was becoming more and more alarmed. At last I positively hung out of the window, and gave the antique cabman a tremendous push with my umbrella, which nearly sent him sprawling over the horse, shouting at the same time, 'Man, man! Where *are* you driving to? You are going the wrong way, I tell you.' He stopped his old breakdown rattling cab, threw down the reins, turned round on the box-seat and said, 'Look 'ere, miss, I'll get inside and you jump on the box, for you're a worritin' me to death.' I said no more; but when I did reach home I thanked my stars!

One day I hired a hansom to go to South Lambeth. The man drove so quickly that I dared not move; the speed almost took my breath away. We tore along to the amazement and alarm of everyone we passed. When we approached Vauxhall Bridge the astonished toll-man came hurriedly to the gate for his money; but away flew the cab, soon leaving the bewildered man far behind, and cheating the company of their due. I began to be resigned to the fact that the horse, man, cab, and myself would very soon be smashed. The driver was tipsy, and the whole situation was sufficiently alarming. Presently we neared my destination, and the cabman seemed likely to leave that behind as he did everything else—a very John Gilpin of a Jehu! I hastily pushed my hand through the little trap-door at the top, and cried, '*Stop, stop!*' upon which he, to my horror, took hold of my hand, shook it, and said, '*Thank you, miss, I'm better than I was!*' In spite of my terror I could not resist laughing; but my thankfulness when I found myself not only safe, but sound, was indescribable!

I now approach a most important event in my career as a manager. Mr. Byron called upon me one day to tell me that an old friend, Mr. Robertson, wished him to read a comedy of his to me, which had been recently acted with success in Liverpool; he added that the play had been offered in turn to Sothern, Alfred Wigan, and to nearly all the London managers, but they would have

nothing to do with it. Mr. Buckstone wrote his opinion that it 'must fail wherever it was produced.' They were chiefly afraid of it, Byron told me, on account of a scene which the journalistic world would take offence at, and the critics would, beyond all doubt, condemn, as it contained sketches of men well known to the author and in 'Bohemia.' Mr. Byron also feared its chance of success himself, but as he had known Tom Robertson, who was at the time in very low water, for many years, he was anxious to do his old friend a good turn ; he dwelt on the danger he saw in the play, and thought that, as young managers, we could not afford to risk offending the critics. I said danger was better than dulness ; the next day, Byron read the comedy to me ; and, when he had finished it, he expressed himself more and more afraid of it. I at once offered to risk its production ; the whole piece seemed to me so clever and original, that I felt sure of its success. Mr. Byron was astonished at my urging our acceptance of the play. At last he agreed that at all events it was worth the trial. This was my first acquaintance with Mr. Robertson, and I cannot describe the charm with which he read his comedy, which further developed the beauties of *Society*, as his new played was called. I remember how he impressed me as being of a highly nervous temperament ; he had a great habit of biting his moustache and caressing his beard—indeed, his hands were rarely still ; he was at that time thirty-six : somewhat above medium height : rather stoutly built : he had a pale skin and reddish beard, with small piercing red-brown eyes, which were ever restless. The rehearsals advanced, and I liked the play more and more ; my views of acting so entirely agreed with Mr. Robertson's that we encountered no difficulties whatever, and everything went smoothly and merrily, although Byron, to the last, dreaded the effect of the 'Owl's Roost' scene. My faith remained unshaken. and acquaintance with the author soon ripened into friendship. Here is an extract from the play-bill which had so marked an influence on my future theatrical life :

On Saturday, November 11, 1865,

WILL BE ACTED AN ORIGINAL COMEDY CALLED

SOCIETY,

WRITTEN BY T. W. ROBERTSON.

LORD PTARMIGANT	MR. HARE.
LORD CLOUDWRAYS, M.P. . . .	MR. TRAFFORD.
SIDNEY DARYL	MR. BANCROFT.*

* As the part I first played in *Society* was a very important one to entrust to so young an actor as I then was, bearing, as it does, much of the burden of the play, I would like to note how much the success I was fortunate enough to achieve was due to the encouragement and support I received from the author, who spared no pains with me, as with others, to have his somewhat novel type

MR. JOHN CHODD, SEN.	MR. J. W. RAY.
MR. JOHN CHODD, JUN.	MR. JOHN CLARKE.
TOM STYLUS	MR. F. DEWAR.
OLINTHUS O'SULLIVAN, D.C.L. . .	MR. MONTGOMERY.
DESMOND McUSQUEBAUGH . . .	MR. HILL.
SAM STUNNER, P.R. (*alias* the 'Smiffel Lamb')	MR. TINDALE.
MOSES AARON	MR. BENNETT.
LADY PTARMIGANT	MISS LARKIN.
MAUD HETHERINGTON . . .	MISS MARIE WILTON.

The success of the comedy soon became the talk of the town, for the first time an additional row of stalls was added, and shortly after its production the Prince of Wales honoured the theatre with his first visit. Perhaps I should say here how the elaborate and careful *dressing* of our plays astonished theatre goers, and was admitted by the critics to be a revelation; for the reader should be reminded this was the era of much stage slovenliness—Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Hare should be justly remembered as the first reformers on their side. At Christmas, we produced Byron's *Little Don Giovanni*, the hero being the last burlesque character he ever wrote for me, as the success of our management made me firmly determined to insist on my original intention to give up acting that kind of part.

A most amusing scene was introduced, suggested by a party of practical jokers, who, one foggy November night, had scaled the railings of Leicester Square, and painted all sorts of colours the already much dilapidated equestrian figure which then stood in the place of Baron Grant's statue of Shakespeare. The horse in the burlesque was dotted all over with a variety of spots, and looked like an exaggerated Lowther Arcade toy. The scene created great laughter.

During the run of *Don Giovanni*, I received the following amusing note from Mr. Buckstone, who came to see our performance:

'You young scamp! you young Don Giovanni! Don't forget your old Don Giovanni. Box for Saturday next, 3rd March. Ever,—BALVIDINI JUAN BUCKSTONE.'

The burlesque was removed from the bill in the early spring, when I said farewell to that branch of the drama for ever. *Society* was played for a hundred and fifty nights—in those days an extraordinary and seemingly, to us, never-ending run.

On Saturday, May 5th, 1886, was acted, for the first time, *A Hundred Thousand Pounds*, an original comedy, written by H. J.

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of characters understood and acted as he wished. I am sorry to add that my ear for music was deficient, to say the least, and recall, readily, painful struggles to learn, and unwearying kindness on Mrs. Bancroft's part to teach me, my share in the song—which I, at length, accomplished effectively—in the 'Owl's Roost;' really, a reproduction of scenes known to Robertson quite well.—S. B. B.

Byron : General Gerald Goodwin, Mr. Bancroft ; Major Blackshaw, Mr. F. Dewar ; Sir Rumsey Waters, Mr. Tindale ; Mr. Charker, Mr. Trafford ; Mr. Fluker, Mr. Hare ; Joe Barlow, Mr. J. W. Ray ; Pennythorne, Mr. J. Clarke ; Pyefinch, Mr. H. W. Montgomery ; Mrs. Barlow, Miss Larkin ; Alice Barlow, Miss Marie Wilton ; Arabella Pell, Miss Blanche Wilton ; Jane Plover, Miss Goodall.

The first act was so clever and complete, being in fact a play in itself, that the rest seemed weak in comparison. The strength of the opening left little or no chance for the next two acts, but it was a well-written play. After the first scene Byron came into the green-room and asked if he could have something to drink, as the agitation had made his mouth 'horribly dry.' I pointed to the little filter which was always kept on a table, and said, 'That is all there is, Byron.' To which he answered, 'That will do quite well ; I will be content with what both peer and peasant alike—*dis*like.'

I must here record another of the author's jokes. During the rehearsals, Mr. Dewar was anxious to know how he could make a distinct change in his appearance. He had worn light wigs and dark wigs, gray wigs and bald wigs ; so one morning, after having been in the property-room where a great deal of dust was about, through some alterations that were going on, his face having got besmeared with some of it, he went up to Byron and asked him to advise him about his make-up for the major. 'You see,' said Mr. Dewar, 'I want to make a complete change. Some have advised me to wear reddish hair mixed with gray ; but what shall I do with my face?' Byron looked at him seriously, and said, 'I should wash it.'

It was during the run of this piece that a sad gloom came over my home. My dear mother, who had been ailing for some time, but whose health had not yet caused us real anxiety, as she had never been strong, seemed to become weaker and weaker. She was so afraid of giving me uneasiness in the midst of my work, that she hid her sufferings from me as long as she was able ; but it became evident to all of us that she was enduring much pain. We were under engagements at the close of the season, which was rapidly approaching, to take our company to Liverpool and Manchester ; but before going, our doctor assured me that my mother's illness was not of an alarming nature, that it was a question of time, and that I was not to be uneasy. This put my heart at rest, and knowing that she was surrounded by my sisters, who nursed and watched her night and day with loving care, I was able to go away comparatively satisfied.

Before starting, we were told that there was a sort of epidemic at Liverpool ; so several of us decided to live at Waterloo, a pretty seaside place a few miles off, where the train could take us every night after the performance was over. We occupied villas facing the sea, and formed quite a little colony of our own, including Mr. Robertson (who came down for the purpose of finishing and pro-

ducing his new comedy, *Ours*, Mr. and Mrs. Byron, Mr. and Mrs. Hare, my sister Augusta, myself, and Mr. Bancroft. We spent a delightful six weeks there. The Liverpool assizes were on at the time, and several barristers whom we knew were there on circuit. Mr. Aspinall, the then Recorder of Liverpool; kindly Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Holker, who had already, by his brilliant talents, earned the position of leader of the Northern Circuit, the familiar members of which body knew him best as 'Sleepy Jack;' Mr. W. R. McConnell, now Revising Barrister of Liverpool; Mr. Leofric Temple, Mr. Walter Bacon, and Mr. W. S. Gilbert, then a briefless barrister. We often made up a party to go to St. George's Hall to hear cases in which some of them were concerned, and I hope my friend Mr. Gilbert will forgive my telling a little story against him which occurred on the day he was going to make his maiden speech in prosecuting an old Irishwoman for stealing a coat.

He was very anxious about his first essay, and we all assembled to hear it. Mr. Gilbert tried for a long time to speak, but the old woman interrupted him so persistently that he could not get a word in edgeways, with such polite remarks as, 'Hold your tongue!' 'Shut up, yer spalpeen!' 'Ah, if ye love me, sit down!' 'It's a lie, yer honour!' 'Hooroo for ould Ireland!' etc. She jumped about and made such a noise every time Mr. Gilbert attempted to speak, that the Judge ordered her to be taken down until the next day; and as she left the dock, the prisoner made a grimace at Mr. Gilbert, which I will not attempt to describe! So, after all, the maiden speech never came off, and I fear we were all immensely amused at Mr. Gilbert's discomfiture. A little later on we were told that Mr. Bacon had received his first brief; the case was to be heard at once, and he had hardly a moment to read it. We rushed off to the court in order not to miss it, and were waiting anxiously, when, by-and-by, a mutual friend came to us to say that Mr. Bacon on opening the brief found it to be a *pig* case, and no one could induce him to have anything to do with it, so he had handed it over to someone else.

Poor Mr. Bacon (or 'Streaky,' as he was called by his companions) was a victim to chaff for a long time afterwards. Our legal friends came down to Waterloo once every week, and the evenings were dedicated to entertainments improvised by ourselves. We had several mock trials, in which Mr. Hare was always condemned to the ignominious position of representing the criminal in the dock. It was interesting to hear the clever speeches, all about nothing, delivered by these rising young barristers. I was sometimes the Judge, and gave imitations of the various gentlemen I had seen on the Bench. My robe was a pink wrapper, and my wig made of cotton-wool. On one occasion, for variety, we got up a mock opera, in which I was the *prima donna*, Mr. Gilbert the lover, Mr. Hare his rival, with large cloak, broad-brimmed hat, and knives and daggers all over him; Mr. McConnell was the *prima donna's*

father, whom he made a deaf old man, so that we were obliged to shout all our recitatives at him through an improvised ear-trumpet. The opera was sung throughout in Italian gibberish, and was a most amusing bit of foolery.

Our audiences were small but appreciative, for they included both Mr. Byron and Mr. Robertson; I never saw them laugh so much in my life. We were all young then, and the fun, perhaps, appeared greater than it would now, but it was a very happy time. Some of those pleasant friends are gone, alas! never to return.

Robertson, having completed his new comedy, read, rehearsed, and produced it in Liverpool. These early performances were very valuable to the ultimate fate of the work, enabling the author to considerably improve the end of the play, before we submitted it to the verdict of a London audience, when I shall refer to its production at greater length.

From time to time I received letters from my mother, written by one of my sisters and only signed by herself; though still very ailing she was cheerful, and counting the days for my return. These letters made me feel contented and happy, but I longed to be near her again. Towards the end of our tour, while we were acting at Manchester, and when I was looking forward to soon going home, one morning (shall I ever forget it?) I received a letter from an old and valued friend of my family, Mr. T. W. Erle, who had undertaken the sad duty of revealing to me the true and fatal nature of my mother's illness. It had been thought prudent to disguise the facts from me as long as possible, but he felt that it would be wrong to keep me in ignorance of the truth any longer, and therefore, as gently and tenderly as he could, he broke the miserable news to me.

My darling, patient mother was fading gradually away from us, and in a short time would leave a blank which could never be filled up. There is not a grateful, loving daughter in the world who will not realize what my feelings were as I read this wretched letter, for her loss meant much to me. My sisters' task was a painful one, for not only had they watched her day and night, but were told to be cheerful in my mother's presence, and not to let her think her malady a fatal one, as suspicion of the truth would hurry on the end. When I reached home I saw the terrible change. Death was coming nearer and nearer, and seemed to chill the house, which already felt empty.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEASON OF 1866-67.

The lights and shades of life—Remarkable success of *Ours*—Byron's entanglement with the Liverpool theatres—His burlesque of *Der Freischütz*—Death of Mrs. Wilton—*Pandora's Box*—Expiration of the partnership with Byron—Some important letters on the subject—Production of *Caste*—Its dedication—A ludicrous situation—Law-suit with Miss Lydia Thompson—The best of friends afterwards—Serjeant Ballantine and Mr. Huddleston, Q.C.—A special train—A young host—Captain Hawtree—The Derby, Hermit's year—Introduced to Edmund Yates.

THE early part of this season was a true picture of life as we often find it—gloom and gaiety being strangely intertwined. At the theatre all was bright and successful; away from it everything was wretched.

With rehearsals for the production of *Ours*, and of a new burlesque to be played soon after in conjunction with it (for which I had been so fortunate as to retain Miss Lydia Thompson's services to fill the place I formerly occupied), and my mother's unhappy illness, my mind and heart had much to do. How I got through my nightly work at the theatre, together with my increasing responsibilities of management, I know not. All that could be done to soften the remaining days of my mother's life was done by devoted children, whose unceasing attention helped to alleviate her sufferings. My anxieties were also greatly increased by Mr. Byron having unfortunately, as it turned out, during our recent engagement at Liverpool become entangled in the management of the theatres there, which took him much from London and laid an unfair strain of work and responsibility upon me: although, I am glad to say, without destruction to our friendship.

The theatre was re-opened in September, when Robertson's new comedy was acted for the first time in London. It was announced as follows:

On Saturday, September 15, 1866, *will be acted*

OURS:

An Original Comedy, by T. W. Robertson, Author of 'Society.'

ACT I.—The Park: Autumn. ACT II.—The Drawing-room: Spring.
Act III.—The Hut: Winter. *Period*—Before and during the Crimean War.

PRINCE PEROVSKY	MR. HARE.
COLONEL SIR ALEXANDER SHENDRYN	MR. J. W. RAY.
ANGUS MACALISTER	MR. BANCROFT.
HUGH CHALCOT	MR. J. CLARKE.
CAPTAIN SAMPREY	MR. TRAFFORD.
SERGEANT JONES	MR. F. YOUNGE.
HOUGHTON	MR. TINDALE.
LADY SHENDRYN	MISS LARKIN.
BLANCHE HAYE	MISS LOUISA MOORE.
MARY NETLEY	MISS MARIE WILTON.

(The cast of the comedy was the same as in the previous August at Liverpool, with the exception of the part of Sergeant Jones, which had been acted there by Mr. Dewar.)

The success of the play was immediate and remarkable, and did much to decide the ultimate fortunes of the theatre and the fame of its author. The effect of the second act, where the troops leave for the Crimea, on the first night's audience was extraordinary, the same enthusiasm being kept up nightly for a very long time; and in the Crimean hut great surprise was caused by the realistic effect of the driving snow each time the door was opened.

Lydia Thompson appeared in a new burlesque by Mr. Byron on the subject of *Der Freischütz*, which was played, on October 10th, in conjunction with *Ours*; but it showed a distinct falling off in the writing, partly owing, perhaps, to his 'losing heart,' as he expressed it, through my refusal to act in it, but very much to divided interests caused by his Liverpool speculations; the burlesque was only moderately successful, although well acted, and Miss Lydia Thompson made a decided success. Fortunately the great popularity of the comedy excused the weakness of the after-piece.

I must now ask the reader to bear with me while I return to the sad subject of my mother's illness. It was evident that she was gradually fading from us. In addition to the constant care of our own family doctor, she was attended by Sir William Fergusson and by Dr. Lee, of Savile Row; but her malady had been taking root for years, and no earthly help could rescue her. The time arrived when it was considered imperative for her to be made aware of her real state. It was a terrible day for us all. She bore her sentence with quiet resignation, and, when we entered the room, she smiled sadly, and said, 'I have received my death-warrant; but I implore you not to give way to grief: be brave, and help me to meet the end.'

One day, soon after, she and I were alone; I was seated on a stool at her feet, and in her half-delirium her mind wandered back to the past, and recalled the time when I was but a child. 'Working so hard,' she murmured with her eyes closed, and this recollection seemed to pain her.

During the last act of *Ours*, Mr. Clarke, who then played Hugh Chalcot, had to say, 'What a charming girl! how interesting! no father, no mother.' The speech had always given me a pang, but on one particular night, when he came to the words 'no mother,' a cold shudder came over me, and I became faint. Directly the comedy was over, I hurried to the sick-bed, with a horrible dread upon me. My sister, Mrs. Fletcher, met me at the door to prepare me for a great change, and to tell me that the end was near. My father and my sisters were all with her, and my mother looked at me as if to say, 'I have waited for you.' The hour came to bid an eternal farewell: but those moments of supreme grief are too sacred to record. How lonely and desolate I felt! I had lost that best of

friends, from whose love I often sought and surely found true sympathy. How I wish that she had been spared to share the good fortune she predicted for me. The modest comfort she enjoyed might have increased to some luxury in her old age (for she was still young when she died). It would have been such a happiness to all her children.

My mother had always a great horror, which I inherit, of being buried in the earth, and my next and last duty was (although I could as yet but ill afford the cost) to build a tomb in Norwood Cemetery, where her children could from time to time take flowers to her.

On the evening following my mother's death, a strange incident was related. The night fireman at the theatre, whose name was Hotine, was a most excellent servant, who had been strongly recommended to us for his post by Captain Shaw. He knew that my mother was ill, but was not aware of any grave cause for anxiety, and did not know of her death until he was informed on his arrival at his post on the following night, and heard that Miss Lydia Thompson, to whose kindness I was indebted for replacing me in *Ours* for a time, was going to appear in my place. Hotine went straight upstairs to my wardrobe-mistress and anxiously asked if she knew at what time my mother died. She could not say, as no one had yet heard any particulars. She asked him why he wanted to know, and he related the following curious circumstance: 'I said "Good-night," as usual, to the young missus, who often says a few kind words before she goes home, and I assured her that all was right and safe; I went round again when the performance was over to make sure, as I always do, you know, after everybody is gone. It was just one o'clock as I sat down to my work' (the man filled up his time by making shoes and boots for his children) 'in the little green-room, with the door leading on to the stage wide open. The clock struck *two*, and then *three*, when a loud crash, just as if a portion of the roof had fallen in, made me jump to my feet; I thought that at least the sunlight chandelier in the ceiling had fallen into the stalls, so I took up my lantern, and went quickly on to the stage to see what had happened. I found everything was just as I had left it. I went all round the theatre, but there was not a thing disturbed.' Hotine seemed scared and frightened, and begged to know the hour of my mother's death. When Mr. Bancroft arrived at the theatre he learnt from him the particulars. My mother died at three o'clock on the morning of November 30th.

For Christmas, Byron wrote the last burlesque that was produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. It was a very poor work, compared with what he had done before, which was all the more regrettable, as it was the means of introducing Miss Henrietta Hodson, who made a most successful first appearance in London, and who, like myself, hailed from Bristol. Its title was *Pandora's Box; or, the Young Spark and the Old Flame;* but candour compels the

admission that it never burnt brightly, and, indeed, hurt the receipts of the theatre instead of improving them.

Byron was now nearly always in Liverpool, where he had taken a house, and we rarely met. From the correspondence between him and myself, in which he first suggested that he should retire altogether from the partnership, I will make a few extracts with a view to place the reader *en rapport* with the position of affairs at this time. These extracts will at least have interest for our many mutual friends.

Mr. Byron's letters are dated from 21, Huskisson Street, Liverpool; mine from London.

FROM MR. BYRON TO ME, *February* 6, 1867.

'It will be better for us both to cease our joint management at the end of our two years, and I shall willingly dissolve partnership, if you wish it, on the 15th April. I consider that by refusing to play in burlesque you have done me an irreparable wrong, and yourself considerable harm; however, I have met your views always, and it is no doubt too late for me to repeat what I have so often said, and what is the general opinion of the public.

* * * * * *

'I shall be in town to-morrow, or Friday, and will telegraph. There will be no occasion to answer this letter, as I shall see you in all probability before return post.'

FROM MR. BYRON TO ME (a telegram), *February* 7, 1867.

'I am unfortunately prevented by business here from going to London.'

FROM ME TO MR. BYRON, *February* 7, 1867.

'I am sorry you are not coming up. Your letter is too long and important to answer easily, and the matters it involves could be so much better settled if we had met at once to talk them over; as, however, you have postponed your visit, I shall answer your letter candidly.

'You tell me that "by refusing to play in burlesque" I have done you an "irreparable wrong." I don't acknowledge anything of the kind. All my acting in either *Der Freischütz* or *Pandora* would have done very little good for them, beyond saving my substitute's salary. I can't help it if my candour wounds you, my dear Byron, but neither of the pieces has been worthy of you—I don't tell you half what I hear said against them—and both burlesques were very much neglected by you at rehearsal. I feel convinced that *Pandora* only wanted your presence to find out its weak points, and want of incident, in order to have made it at least a tolerable success.

'You have often upbraided me with the sacrifices you have made in writing only for one theatre; I admit that your literary reputation would naturally suffer, but it has been a very great commercial

gain. You have written five burlesques and two comedies, for which you will have received, by April next, a thousand pounds in salary and half of the entire profits. You must also remember that when we started you risked nothing—I risked all. You even made me sign a paper to indemnify you from any share in whatever loss I might suffer; and for the money I borrowed I have been paying a high interest, not a penny of which have I claimed from the treasury.

'You must remember, too, Byron, that when you took the Liverpool theatres I never murmured, nor even opposed you, although I felt it must prove a fatal blow to my interests; now tell me, frankly, if any other partner would have done this? It is impossible for me not to see that all your energies are now in Liverpool, and if we dissolve partnership at Easter, and I carry on the theatre without you, I don't think my conduct during our two years' business connection will cause you to entertain a single unfriendly feeling towards me.

'You must know well enough that I have no personal wish to separate from you: indeed, I should be only too glad if we could go on together as we did the first two seasons; but what a partnership becomes under present circumstances, with you and all your energies centred in Liverpool, I leave you to candidly think about.'

FROM MR. BYRON TO ME, *February* 8, 1867.

'Much in your letter is very right and very true. Let me, however, correct *one* mistake about the risk. You certainly risked a thousand pounds, and I stipulated that in case of its loss *you* would have no claim on *me*; but in all business transactions at the theatre during our joint management, I have stood precisely the same risk as you. I told you frankly about the *original* risk when you applied to me to join you.

* * * * * *

'Your conduct in the matter of my taking these theatres was truly admirable, and was fully appreciated by me, so much so that you will remember I said at the time I should not consent—on a renewal of our management after two years—to take *half* the profits as my share, considering my frequent absence and divided duty. This I strongly impressed on you at Waterloo, and if we had remained in partnership, I should have insisted on your receiving the lion's share of the reward. Had my name been associated on the bills, etc., with the management, it would have been different; but as it has always been my aim to award the managerial position to you, as I have never made any engagement or arrangement except at your wish, as you have always superintended the dressing of pieces, they have also been cast as you wished, and as the real management of the theatre has devolved on you, I could not tell how my being a great deal away could materially affect you.'

My letter in reply was, in substance, an urgent request to Mr. Byron to 'come up to town at once, that some final result should be immediately arrived at.'

The result was that our partnership—I rejoice to add, not our friendship—ended on April 15th, two years after its commencement. One further sentence of a letter in corroboration of a previous statement of mine will perhaps suffice.

FROM MR. BYRON TO ME, *April* 10, 1867.

'Our letter of agreement is in my desk in London. It settled you were to receive ten pounds weekly until the end of the second year, thus making the thousand pounds you advanced. This you have done with the exception of one week. If you will draw all the money banked in our joint names out of the bank, after paying yourself the extra ten pounds, you can send me my share of it. I waive all right to half the value of the property in the theatre in consideration of your taking any outstanding debts on your own shoulders.

'Mrs. Byron sends you her kind love. God bless you.'

Subsequently Mr. James, who was still the lessee of the theatre, became a partner, without advancing money, in its fortunes for a few years, which will be further referred to. With Mr. James our relations were throughout of the pleasantest kind.

Ours was acted for a hundred and fifty nights on its first production, its author meanwhile being engaged on a new comedy to succeed it, and which he called *Caste*. I vividly recall the effect he produced by his exquisite reading of his work to the little band of players who had the delightful task of first acting it, for I don't know of such cleverly drawn and powerfully contrasted parts in any other modern play. The rehearsals were a labour of love. My old Strand comrade, George Honey, was chosen for the boldly painted character of Eccles, and to that charming actress, Lydia Foote, was entrusted the beautiful part of his daughter Esther. Mr. Hare had the opportunity of wonderful contrast in descending from the old Russian Prince to the splendid type of the real working man, Sam Gerridge. Miss Larkin brought all her art to bear on the part of the proud old mother, whose son poor Fred Younge, we all believed, at last thought himself to really be, so earnestly did he live in the joys and sorrows of George D'Alroy. Mr. Bancroft had a striking character after his own heart. As for myself, I fairly revelled in the high spirits of Polly Eccles, and may mention that the expedient in the last act of breaking the news to Esther that her husband was not dead, by means of a mock ballet, grew from our impromptu entertainments at Waterloo of the previous summer, to which I alluded in the foregoing chapter.

I will now give an extract from the play-bill which records the production:

On Saturday, April 6, 1867, *will be acted, for the first time,*

CASTE:

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY, WRITTEN BY T. W. ROBERTSON,

The Author of 'Society' and 'Ours.'

HON. GEORGE D'ALROY	Mr. Frederick Younge.
CAPTAIN HAWTREE	Mr. Bancroft.
ECCLES	Mr. George Honey.
SAM GERRIDGE	Mr. Hare.
MARQUISE DE SAINT-MAUR	Miss Larkin.
ESTHER ECCLES	Miss Lydia Foote.
POLLY ECCLES.	Miss Marie Wilton.

Act I.—The Little House at Stangate: Courtship. Act II.—The Lodgings in Mayfair: Matrimony. Act III.—The Little House in Stangate: Widowhood.

The success of *Caste* passed my wildest dreams, and formed the attraction of the evening, being simply preceded by a farce.

This comedy is specially endeared to me by the dedication: 'To Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft) this Comedy is Dedicated by her Grateful Friend and Fellow-Labourer, the Author.'

I can well remember during the first run of *Caste* one of the rare occasions on which I was tempted to laugh on the stage in a serious situation. I think when I relate the story I shall be forgiven. Mr. Hare, always a most earnest and conscientious actor, must also plead guilty with me. It happened in the last act; Mr. Younge, who was playing George D'Alroy, had a long wait, and the weather being very hot, he was in the habit of taking off his wig and going into the green-room for a chat until he was called for the stage. On this particular night a member of the company played the unpardonable practical joke of hiding the wig, and left the theatre, forgetting having done so—a mistake deeply regretted afterwards, for this joke was merely intended to cause a temporary confusion. It will be remembered by those who know the play that George D'Alroy is supposed to have been killed in the Indian Mutiny, for which campaign he departs at the end of the second act, where an affecting parting takes place between himself and his young wife. In the last act we are all back at the poor little house in Stangate in mourning, and in deep sorrow for his death. In the scene where Polly Eccles is preparing tea for Captain Hawtree and Sam Gerridge, they are all seated at the table, Polly complaining that the milkman is very late. George D'Alroy, who has marvellously escaped death in the mutiny, and has hurried home, arriving in fact before the news of his safety, has seen the milkman outside, and takes the small can from him, brings it in, and comes to the table unseen by any of them, expecting a warm welcome. Polly is in the act of putting the cup to her lips, when she raises her eyes slowly and sees George. She stares at him, thinking he is the

ghost of her dead brother-in-law, slowly puts down the cup, keeping her eyes still fixed with terror upon him, and gradually disappears under the table. Sam Gerridge is eating his thick slice of bread-and-butter, quite oblivious of what is going on until he sees Polly go under the table. He looks up with surprise, and, seeking the cause of this strange proceeding, fixes his eyes on George, who is still standing with the milk-can in his hand, and, terrified, follows Polly with a dive under the same table. Captain Hawtree notices this strange conduct, and turns his chair round to ascertain what they have both been staring at. He is equally astonished to see his dead friend come to life, but does not express his amazement in the same fashion, remaining in his chair transfixed. All this is done in silence, not a word being uttered. That is the situation. Well, on the night the wig was missing, every search was made by the dressers, and nowhere could it be found. There was nothing to be done by Mr. Younge but to go on without it. His hat was, of course, made to fit over the wig, and his own hair being cut short, the hat, when on, came so low down that it almost covered his ears, and had somewhat the appearance of an extinguisher. The effect this appearance had upon us can be imagined. On looking up, I saw only a part of his face, hidden under the huge pot-hat, and no ears! It was so sudden and unexpected, that instead of a look of terror on my face, there was nothing but a convulsive effort to suppress laughter. Mr. Younge muttered under his breath, 'For mercy's sake, don't laugh!' I had no sooner disappeared under the table, than I heard Mr. Hare give a kind of grunt, which told me how the strange appearance had affected him, and he and I were under the table exhausted with laughter. Mr. Younge only added to the absurdity of the situation by looking exceedingly angry at such a trick being played upon him: his agitation, serious expression, and, above all, his desperate earnestness in begging us not to laugh, with his head buried in a hat which almost came down to his neck, holding the milk-can out for me to take—a situation which was always a most impressive and interesting one—at this particular moment became to us painfully comic. My efforts to suppress my laughter made me positively ill. When Mr. Hare and I emerged from under the table to see if George D'Alroy were really a ghost or absolute flesh and blood, the moment we faced him we were again convulsed with laughter, for he had removed the extinguisher, and showed his own close-cut dark hair of convict type in place of the flaxen wig. In the business of the scene I had to go off into hysterics when I ascertained for a fact that George was really alive. This was lucky for me, for it helped me to give vent to my laughter. But poor Mr. Hare, whose mouth was full of bread-and-butter, had no such safety-valve, and almost choked. At last we got through the play, and I returned to my dressing-room perfectly exhausted. I believe Mr. Younge never forgave the trick that was played upon him.

Miss Thompson's engagement ended, unhappily, in a dispute, which had to be settled at Westminster, where the Law Courts then were. Lord Chief Justice Bovill, I remember, presided. Mr. (since Sir John, and now Baron) Huddleston fought for my opponent, while our old friend, the late Mr. Serjeant Ballantine, represented our views of the case. The question at issue was of considerable moment to the theatrical world, and during the trial the court was very crowded. While I was giving my evidence I recall quite distinctly the fact of Mr. Bancroft, who occupied a prominent position in the front of the little gallery, enlivening the proceedings by dropping his walking-stick in dangerous proximity to the heads of the junior bar. The case ended in a trivial verdict ; inferring, I presume, that plaintiff and defendant were both in the right and both in the wrong. I am afraid I regarded 'the law' as a thing 'fearfully and wonderfully made,' and inclined, very often, to the opinion expressed on the subject by the immortal Mr. Bumble.

In the case of Lydia Thompson and myself the saying, 'It is astonishing how much better I like a man after I have fought with him,' was very true, for we have been the best of friends ever since.

On the evening after the trial it so chanced that we met Mr. Huddleston, who was then known as the 'buck of the bar,' at a party, when our opponent of the previous day had to take me in to dinner, and I had the great pleasure to commence a friendship which my husband and I have enjoyed ever since.

NOTES BY MR. BANCROFT.

I have but a few paragraphs to add to Mrs. Bancroft's history of this season. I recall an incident which befell John Clarke during the run of *Ours*, owing to the removal for a short while from the time-tables of the long-standing five o'clock train from Brighton, where Clarke had gone from Sunday morning to the Monday afternoon ; during which he learnt by accident, while shopping with his host or hostess (who will well remember the incident), that the five o'clock train, to catch which he was then on his way to the station, had been taken off. Horror-stricken at the discovery—as it must be remembered that plays began much earlier in those days, for we had not yet introduced the luxurious eight and half-past eight commencement, and the curtain rose to *Ours* shortly after seven, the comedy being acted in conjunction with a burlesque—Clarke was driven to the station at a furious pace, to find the news confirmed. There was then no other train for hours, and no possibility of reaching town except by a special. This was quickly ordered, and he was shot, with his luggage, into the solitary compartment, and arrived at Victoria shaken to a jelly. Then, thanks to a rapid hansom, he dashed up the stairs of the theatre to his dressing-room, just in time to relieve our anxiety and to do his work, for which all sorts of impromptu arrangements were being considered ; for he counted on arriving, as he did, just in time, and had not telegraphed news of his adven-

ture. While scrambling into his clothes, he gasped out a request to me to send down some money to the cabman ; and I can recall his indignation now, as he told me the story, at having, after paying for the special train, to take a ticket to London, as his own return half was only valid by an ordinary train.

I remember also, at about the same time, feeling an addition to my importance, when I gave my first 'man's dinner-party.' Among the guests who then honoured their young host I know were Sothern, Boucicault, and Tom Hood. Dining soon afterwards at Sothern's charming old house in Wright's Lane, Kensington, I sat next to a man whose appearance faintly suggested my make-up as Hawtree ; this happened during the early rehearsals of *Caste*. All that had been said on the subject by the author when he read his comedy, by way of describing George D'Alroy and his friend Captain Hawtree, was that he wished one of them to be fair, and the other dark.

Fred Younge was amazed when I went to him and asked if he would mind being the fair man. He said how on earth could he do such a thing ! He was the sentimental hero, and of course was intended to be dark ; while, as what he described as the comic dandy or fop, I was equally compelled to be fair, and wear long flaxen whiskers. I eventually succeeded in touching a very pardonable vanity—his only drawback to his ever-to-be-remembered performance being that he had already partly lost his *première jeunesse* —by suggesting that a chestnut-coloured wig would give him youth. At any rate I got my way ; but I believe, at the time, I was by more than one person thought to be mad for venturing to clothe what was supposed to be, more or less, a comic part in the quietest of fashionable clothes, and to appear as a pale-faced man with short, straight black hair. The outline of the plot and portions of the dialogue of *Caste* may be found in a contribution by Robertson to a Christmas volume edited by Tom Hood, which was called *Rates and Taxes*, and published at Christmas, 1866 ; and apropos of a play and part to which I owe so much, had I at the time read the story on which he built up his *chef d'œuvre*, I should certainly have begged Robertson to have retained the incident of the loss of an arm which is the case with the equivalent to Hawtree, as I think I could have turned it to good account in the last act. It was in *Caste* that we made a distinct stride towards realistic scenery. The rooms, for the first time, had ceilings, while such details as locks to doors, and similar matters, had never before been seen upon the stage.

On 'the Hill' at Epsom this year, memorable in racing circles through the snowstorm in which Hermit won the Derby, I was first introduced to Edmund Yates, whose friendship for now full twenty years I have enjoyed, with no remembrance of a rough word having ever imperilled it.

I wonder if he remembers who presented me to him, or if he

recollects my asking him later on what he expected the mutual acquaintance in question, who might not have really known his face and form until 'Ape' immortalized them in one of his marvellous drawings for *Vanity Fair*, would think of the caricature. Yates's reply to my question was in these words: 'Well, my dear B., if you want my opinion, I should say he would tell everybody he thought it delightful; but when he got home would lock the door, and rub his head in the hearthrug!'

Caste went bravely on, and its great success firmly established the little theatre in public regard. The run was by no means exhausted when the season ended in July, to allow the fulfilment of engagements to play it for four weeks at the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, which was then under Mr. Byron's management, and also for a month at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester. The play was received at both cities with extraordinary enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEASON OF 1867-68.

Gilbert's farce, *Allow Me to Explain*—Boucicault's comedy, *How She Loves Him*—A subterfuge at rehearsal—Burning of Her Majesty's Theatre—Criticism by Edmund Yates—*Box and Cox*—*Caste* in the provinces—Death of Lady Harrington and of Charles Kean—Anecdotes of Kean—Letter from Boucicault—Robertson's new comedy, *Play*—Henry Irving—Paul Bedford—Byron's humorous description—Vacation at Broadstairs and Paris—Yates's proffered comedy—A Ham Peggoty story from real life.

COMMENCED BY MR. BANCROFT.

THE successful career of *Caste* was resumed on Saturday, September 28th, and on November 4th a clever little farce —one of the earliest works of its since distinguished author, to whom playgoers have been so greatly indebted, W. S. Gilbert—called *Allow Me to Explain*, was produced and played as an after-piece to the comedy, George Honey and myself taking the principal characters. A comedy named *How She Loves Him*, written by Dion Boucicault, and which had been originally acted in America, was under consideration for some little time, and finally fixed upon to succeed *Caste*, Robertson cordially agreeing with our effort to avoid offering the public *toujours perdrix*, and being anxious to be relieved from the responsibility of continually providing the programme. This arrangement was all the more welcome to him at this time, as he was on the eve of going to Frankfort to be married to Miss Feist, a handsome German girl, who was his second wife. A letter from Boucicault, who had his play in two forms—a three-act and a five-act version—is interesting after this long lapse of time:

'326, Regent Street, *November* 10, 1867.

'MY DEAR MARIE,—Shall I tell you what you said when you read the piece? "Oh dear! this is not what I expected; I don't see this at all!"

'Now show me how good you think me by saying outright what you think, and don't offend me by "doing the nice," and by imagining that you can ever wound my vanity.

'The piece you have *is* the old piece cut into three instead of into five acts, with two scenes *added* to bind the first and second acts into one, and the fourth and fifth into one; the second being the old third. There! you see I will not allow you any escape! The comedy is one of "character and conversation," sketchy and slight. It does not "smack" on your palate, and you are disappointed sadly. There, there! pout it out! Push the glasses away, and say, "Give me something else," and don't dare to imagine that I shall be the less sincerely yours, DION BOUCICAULT.'

It was eventually settled that the comedy should be produced in its five-act form, and the rehearsals of it were soon commenced under the direction of the author. H. J. Montague—a young actor of great personal charm, who, we felt sure, had every chance of growing into public favour—was engaged, and also Mr. Blakeley, known well by both of us in Liverpool, and who in this play made his first London appearance. Boucicault's accomplished power as a stage-manager is too well known to need our praise, and it was a lesson to young managers to sit under him. Sometimes, however, he would change a fragment of the stage business, previously arranged, for the worse—not perhaps an altogether unknown weakness with dramatic authors; there was, we thought, a distinct instance of this at the end of the first act of *How She Loves Him*, which at last got very muddled. An idea struck one of us which was a distinct improvement on what had been rehearsed, but we hardly, in those days, liked to interfere with such an autocrat, kind as we had always found him. We are sure our old friend will forgive the disclosure of the stratagem by which we brought about the wished-for alteration, which for a long time we could not see our way to. At last it was done by attributing the notion to himself, and one he had, as we ventured to think, at a previous rehearsal, discarded too hastily. Whether he saw through our trick or not, he never divulged; but he rewarded the shrewdness by adopting the suggestion.

While these rehearsals were in progress, it was my lot to see, on the night of December 6th, 1867, the burning of Her Majesty's Theatre. I was on my way to have supper in the coffee-room of the Café de l'Europe, which was then partitioned off into the old-fashioned 'boxes,' and much frequented by old Mr. Keeley, Buckstone, Walter Montgomery, Sothern, Kendal (then a young Haymarket recruit), Walter Lacy, and other kindred souls. I stood

among the enormous crowd in the Haymarket, rooted to the spot by the hideous fascination of the flames, which quickly enough worked their will. This was the fiercest fire I ever saw, and nothing could be done beyond saving the adjoining buildings. Thus the old home of Jenny Lind, of Malibran, of Grisi, and of Titiens, became, as they now are, a memory.

Although *Caste* would surely have drawn good houses for a much longer time, we continued the principle we had already begun of making a *répertoire* to fall back upon, and withdrew the play on Friday, December 20th, after a hundred and fifty-six performances —a number which seems of little moment now, but in those days bespoke exceptional success—and on the following evening the new programme met with a somewhat stormy reception.

On Saturday, December 21, 1867, *will be produced*

A MODERN COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS, ENTITLED

HOW SHE LOVES HIM,

WRITTEN BY DION BOUCICAULT,

The Author of 'London Assurance,' 'Old Heads and Young Hearts,' etc., etc.

SIR ABEL HOTSPUR, H.E.I.C.S. (*an Invalid*)	Mr. W. Blakeley.
BEECHER SPRAWLEY	Mr. Bancroft.
MR. NETTLETOP (*divorced from his Wife*)	Mr. Hare.
DICK HEARTLEY (*in love with Atalanta*)	Mr. H. J. Montague.
DOODY (*Attendant on Sir Abel*)	Mr. J. P. Reynolds.
SIR JERICHO MAXIMUM, M.D.	Mr. E. Dyas.
DR. MINIMUM (*a Homœopathic Doctor*)	Mr. H. W. Montgomery.
DR. AQUARIUS ZKWERTZ (*a Hydropathic Doctor*)	Mr. Tindale.
SPARKS (*an Electropathic Practitioner*)	Mr. Trafford.
TUCKER (*a Servant*)	Mr. Hill.
LADY SELINA RAFFLETICKET (*a Woman about Town*)	Mrs. Leigh Murray.
MRS. NETTLETOP	Miss Lydia Foote.
MISS ATALANTA CRUISER	Miss Marie Wilton.
BOBBY (*a Maid of all work*)	Miss George.

The Scene passes during the first Four Acts at Snuggleton-super-Mare, a Fashionable Seaside Watering-place; during the Fifth at Putney.

Nothing could have been more cordial than the applause which greeted the first and second acts, and the good news was sent to the author to the Princess's Theatre, where he was acting at the time. An immensely amusing scene in the next act between a patient and doctors of every opposite belief—allopathic, homœopathic, hydropathic, and galvanic—was received with hearty laughter. Unfortunately a situation at the end of it, about which Boucicault had been very obstinate during the rehearsals, went all wrong, and the rest of the play was not allowed to redeem the

mistake. It was a great pity, for, as may well be thought, no comedy by Boucicault could fail to contain great characterization and charm of writing—much in this being equal to his best, being, in fact, described as 'worthy of Congreve and Douglas Jerrold.'

Individually, the failure of the play was a great loss to me, as, personally, I was fortunate enough to make a hit in a part which otherwise might have grown popular, Beecher Sprawley—a character in which I built up some eccentricities founded on the peculiarities of two friends, neither of whom detected me, and both of whom were among the warmest in their praise.

Edmund Yates, with whom at that time I had but the barest acquaintance, thus wrote of my performance: 'It is, I am told, the fashion with some journals to find fault with Mr. Bancroft. I am bound to state that the parts I have seen him fill in *Ours*, *Caste*, and the comedy now under notice, could not possibly have been better played. All the characters are of the *genus* "dandy." In former years, the actor personating them would have put on a palpably false moustache, would have worn spurs, carried a riding-whip everywhere, and would have simply substituted the letter "w" for the letter "r" throughout his part—the whole personation representing a creature such as had never been seen by mortal man off the stage. But I maintain that in voice, costume, bearing, and manner, Mr. Bancroft is an exact type of the class he is intended to represent, with a very slight exaggeration, which is as necessary for stage purposes as rouge itself. I am told that members of the class depicted object to Mr. Bancroft's delineation as a *charge*; but they forget that they are really the *charges* of society.'

The afterpiece to *How She Loves Him* (for audiences were hardly yet contented with a single play as a night's entertainment in those days) was the old farce *Box and Cox*, cast as follows: Box, Mr. George Honey; Cox, Mr. Hare; Mrs. Bouncer, Mrs. Leigh Murray.

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

I must ask for a brief pause in our narrative to tell of what was to me a sad loss. Poor Lady Harrington was suffering from her old winter complaint, bronchitis, and had been for some time so ill as to be confined to her bed. I had received a dictated letter from her, full as usual of kind thoughts and affectionate messages, saying how ill she was, but still hoping to recover soon. I was thinking about her very much, and was naturally anxious, for this malady at her age was serious, and repeated winter attacks left her less able each time to bear their recurrence.

On the afternoon of Friday, December 27, my mind was unaccountably full of thoughts about her. I had been making some purchases in Regent Street, and on my way home in a cab was wondering, as I was driven through the crowd of vehicles, if I

should ever see her in her well-known carriage again, with its snuff-coloured 'Petersham brown' body, the long brown coats, the silver hat-cords of the coachman and footman, the half-crescents of white leather which formed part of the harness across the foreheads of the horses.

On the following day I received the sorrowful news that Lady Harrington was dead at the time I had thought so much of her, and that I had lost a friendship for which Time can never lessen my gratitude.

RESUMED BY MR. BANCROFT.

The death of Lady Harrington reminds me that very shortly afterwards Charles Kean also passed away, and of my last sight of him, almost within view of the scene of his many triumphs. Early in the year I was on my way to pay a professional visit to Sir William Fergusson, when, close to Hanover Square, I had to stand aside while the figure of an evidently dying man was lifted from a carriage and almost carried into an adjoining house. Among the idlers and the passers-by who stopped to stare at him, I alone recognised all that was left of the once famous actor. I already knew him to be ill; but this glance showed him to be stricken with mortal sickness. He looked, indeed, very like his own powerful realization of death in the last scene of *Louis XI.*

Very shortly afterwards he was laid at rest in the little churchyard at Catherington, in Hampshire, where he had made his mother's grave, having left instructions that he should be placed with her to whom, in her lifetime, he had been so devoted and true a son.

For the following anecdote of Charles Kean we were years ago indebted to our old comrade Arthur Wood, and cannot resist the temptation to try and repeat it: The carpenters of country theatres always dreaded Charles Kean's advent amongst them, for, in his earlier days on the stage, when he rehearsed, he would steadily go through his own scenes, word for word (although he must have acted the parts hundreds of times), slowly and deliberately dwelling upon each sentence, just as he would at night. During the whole of this time silence was strictly ordered to be observed all over the theatre; a creaking boot, a cough, a sneeze, the knocking of a hammer, would destroy the illusion, and distress the tragedian beyond measure. It was on pain of dismissal if any carpenter or other servant caused the smallest interruption during Mr. Kean's scenes. This naturally made the working men angry, as the scenic preparation for the tragedies was extremely heavy, and in those days there was always a change of programme every evening.

These delays and cessations of work caused much ill-humour amongst the men, for when they really ought to have been having their dinners, they were compelled to work, or the scenes would never have been ready by night. Directly it became known by the

carpenters that 'Kean was coming,' there would be shrugging of shoulders, groans, and various expressions of discontent. At the commencement of one particular engagement these men formed a conspiracy amongst themselves. The opening play was *Hamlet*, and they conceived a plan by which the royal Dane might be induced to 'cut short' his long soliloquies, and so give them a chance of proceeding with their duties and dining at their usual hour, instead of being compelled to sit or stand looking at one another, not daring to move. The plot was this: One particular man was to place himself somewhere at the back of the gallery (reaching a loft under the roof, in fact, through a trap-door), being quite hidden from sight. It was settled that just as Kean began his great soliloquy this man should call out in a muffled voice to an imaginary fellow-workman. This was the result:

KEAN (after walking up and down the stage and then sitting down reflectively, in slow, measured tones): 'To be—or *not*—to be' (long pause)—'that is the question.'

VOICE (far-off in front of house, calling): 'Jo Attwood!'

KEAN (stopping and looking in the direction, then commencing again after same business): 'To be—or *not*—to—be—that is the question.'

VOICE (nearer): 'Jo Attwood!'

KEAN (after waiting and looking about): 'To be or not to—be—that is the question.'

VOICE (farther off): 'Jo Attwood!'

KEAN (bewildered and annoyed, and in measured tones): 'Will somebody find Mr. Attwood?' (A pause)—'To be or, not to be—that is the question.'

VOICE (louder): 'Jo Attwood!'

KEAN: 'Until Mr. Attwood is found I cannot go on!'

'Mr. Attwood' could *not* be found, and the voice, which no one recognised, so well disguised was it, did not cease interrupting Kean, who, at last, gave up his attempt to rehearse and went home; upon which all the carpenters met in their work-room, shut the door, and, in shoeless feet, silently went through a sort of triumphant war-dance.

Kean shared with England's greatest actor, David Garrick, an inordinate love of praise, even from his humblest worshippers. During his brilliant management of the Princess's Theatre, one of the ballet-girls, who sometimes was given a few lines to speak, and who knew her manager's failing, used to haunt the wings and go into audible raptures over the tragedian's acting. He was playing with great success a pathetic part, and tears flowed down the cheeks of the cunning girl, who eventually attracted personal notice from the actor. Soon she found herself promoted to a superior position. Her advancement, of course, was noticed by her companions, and to her greatest friend among them she told her secret, advising the girl to follow her example. Nothing loth, number two

appeared at the wings, and almost howled with grief through Kean's chief scenes. She was, in fact,

'Like Niobe, all tears,'

when, to her amazement, he strode angrily by her, then, pointing her out, exclaimed, 'Who is that idiot?' *She* did not improve her position, for, since the advice of her knowing friend, the bill had been changed, and her manager was appearing in one of his most successful *comic* parts.

Among Charles Kean's most popular productions was that unique specimen of the supernatural drama, the *Corsican Brothers*. In the first act, Fabian dei Franchi addresses a letter to his brother as the vision appears to him. In our collection of autographs is one of these letters, written on the stage of the Princess's, which was given to us by Mr. Hastings, who was then the prompter of the theatre. It is a proof how deeply Kean was engrossed in the mock business of the scene, for it runs as follows: 'My brother—my dearest Louis—if this finds you still alive, write instantly—though but two words—to reassure me. I have received a terrible admonition. Write—write.—C. K. 1st August, 1859.'

Charles Kean was a wonderful instance of the effect of resolute courage; for years he was laughed at and ridiculed by a large section of the press, and treated with absolute and unworthy cruelty by the withering pen of Douglas Jerrold. Through indomitable pluck he outlived it all, and heard himself publicly spoken of when he was the guest of the shining lights of the land as having 'made the theatre into a gigantic instrument of education for the instruction of the young, and edification, as well as instruction, of those of maturer years.' We hope that the ground sown with good seed by great actors of the past has not been neglected by their successors.

We were a little taken by surprise with regard to the failure of *How She Loves Him* to attract as we had hoped; so was Robertson, he not being ready with the comedy which we had all agreed should follow it. His new work also required much more elaborate scenery than any we yet had undertaken, the scene being laid throughout in Germany, where, chiefly in Baden-Baden, he had passed a holiday in the previous summer. However, all haste was made, and Robertson soon read his piece to us; the heroine being named after his bride. In spite of much charm in the dialogue and characters, the subject also being laid on fresh ground, as a drama we felt there was a great falling off from *Caste* and the other early plays. Fortunately, the parts seemed wonderfully adapted to the company—a quality in which Robertson was perhaps pre-eminent—and the rehearsals were attacked with vigour.

Boucicault's kindness about *How She Loves Him* continued till the end of its run, and was not interfered with by the disappointment resulting from its failure to draw large houses. He even

carried his good-nature so far as to decline to accept any fees throughout its career of forty-seven nights. When it was withdrawn he wrote this letter:

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I regret that my comedy was caviare to the public. I doubted its agreement with their taste and stomach, and so told you before it was played.

'If it has profited you little in money, lay by its experience.

'The public pretend they want pure comedy; this is not so. What they want is *domestic drama*, treated with broad comic character. A sentimental, pathetic play, comically rendered, such as *Ours*, *Caste*, the *Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue*.

'Robertson differs from me, not fundamentally, but scenically; his action takes place in lodgings or drawing-rooms—mine has a more romantic scope.

'Be advised, then; refuse dramas which are wholly serious or wholly comic—seek those which blend the two. You have solved this very important question for yourself. Comedy, pure and simple, is rejected of 1868.—Believe me always very sincerely yours, DION BOUCICAULT.'

We now append a copy of the first bill of Robertson's new comedy:

On Saturday, February 15, 1868, *will be acted*

A NEW AND ORIGINAL COMEDY, ENTITLED

PLAY,

By T. W. Robertson, the Author of 'Society,' 'Ours, and 'Caste.

THE GRAF VON STAUFENBERG .	MR. H. W. MONTGOMERY.
THE HON. BRUCE FANQUEHERE .	MR. HARE.
CAPITAN STOCKSTADT . .	MR. SYDNEY.
THE CHEVALIER BROWNE . .	MR. BANCROFT.
MR. BODMIN TODDER . . .	MR. W. BLAKELEY.
FRANK PRICE	MR. H. J. MONTAGUE.
A CROUPIER	MONSIEUR EUGENE SILVEYRA.
ROSIE FANQUEHERE . . .	MISS MARIE WILTON.
AMANDA	MISS LYDIA FOOTE.
MRS. KINPECK	MRS. LEIGH MURRAY.

Time—The Present. *Scene*—Germany. ACT I.—Der Brunnen! Morning. ACT II.—Das Alte Schloss! Afternoon. ACT III.—Der Vorplatz! Evening. Der Spielsaal! Night. ACT IV.—Der Kursaal und Kurgarten! The next day.

The success of the production passed our best hopes (demanding, in fact, an addition to the number of stalls), but certainly owed much to the acting and the care with which the tender plant was nursed. Hawes Craven painted some really beautiful scenery, the old ruined castle, with an effect of the sun dancing on the flowing

river far below, being an ambitious attempt upon so small a stage. Robertson was fresh from Baden-Baden, and supplied a great deal of local colour with regard to picturesque detail outside the springs and in the gaming-room, so all went merrily on both sides the curtain.

On the night of the fourth performance of this new play, the Prince and Princess of Wales were at the theatre, which we note from the fact of its being the first time his Royal Highness came behind the scenes and honoured the green-room with a visit; it being also the first time we had either of us ever been in conversation with the Prince, whose well-known love of exactitude in such matters enabled us to correct a slight error in the Graf von Staufenberg's uniform.

Walking arm-in-arm with Montague one day in the early spring of this year, we turned from Piccadilly into the Burlington Arcade, and there met Henry Irving, to whom I had hardly spoken before. The first time I ever saw him was in the previous summer while we were at Manchester, when I was immensely struck by his rehearsal one morning of the part of Rawdon Scudamore in Dion Boucicault's play, *Hunted Down*, in which shortly afterwards, at the St. James's Theatre, he laid the foundation of his fame. Montague he already knew well. We were all young fellows then, Irving some three years our senior. We two turned back with Irving, when he and I began acquaintance, which ripened into friendship, to be more than once spoken of in this book.

Play went gaily on its career until some time in May, when its good fortune received a sudden check, like all things theatrical in that year, which was that of the great drought and most exceptional heat. The big receipts then began to fall off, the sun grew fiercer and fiercer, the theatres more and more deserted, and we felt our play would not last the season out. Its run, which reached a hundred and six nights, was the shortest of all the Robertson comedies. An addition at this time to the list of theatres I have acted in reminds me of the date, May 16th, that the old Adelphi favourite, Paul Bedford, so long the butt for Wright and afterwards for Toole, left the stage for good. On the occasion a farewell benefit was given to him at the Queen's Theatre, our contribution being the first act of *Play*. The new generation will know little of Paul Bedford, but older play-goers will recall his enormous body surmounted by a face very like that of a kitchen clock, and his perpetual 'I believe you, my boy!' In a little amateur manuscript magazine, the work of mutual friends for Mrs. Bancroft's amusement, and which we laugh at now sometimes, the contributors happily numbering H. J. Byron, are some remarks he wrote about Paul Bedford, among other comic 'Answers to (imaginary) Correspondents,' which we will quote:

'We beg to state that we never give any information about actors; but as you say you have taken us in ever since we came out, we will, for once in a way, gratify your curiosity by giving a

concise history of Mr. Paul Bedford. His father was an undertaker in a large way, and his mother was, of course, a *pall*-bearer. In early life he mixed much with mutes, and later on he mixed a good deal with liquids. He was so very sheepish when young that his parents thought of bringing him up to the "*baa*," but he always preferred the stage to the *pen*. He was very young as a child, but as he advanced in years he grew older. He grew so exceedingly fat, that his figure had been frequently known to fill the house. He had one severe illness, when he got up thin, but eventually came down plump. He has lost four double teeth, and is marked with a door-key in the small of his back—not that at first sight it is very easy to determine where the small is. He parts his hair from ear to ear, and takes his annual cold in the head every twelfth of October. He has several children, who take after their parent; but as the parent generally finishes his glass, it is needless to state that they take very little after him. He is partial to dumb animals, and keeps two hedgehogs and a highly-trained tortoise in his hind pocket. He is of a mechanical turn of mind, and once invented a machine for extracting the winkle from its tortuous shell. He offered it for four thousand pounds to Government, who, however, preferred a pin and rejected the invention. He may be seen between the hours of seven and eleven every evening, except Sundays, when he goes out of town to visit an aged grandson. He eats heartily when in spirits, and is seldom empty when in full health. He is particularly partial to broiled fish, and generally eats a *Paul Herring* for breakfast. He takes snuff, and sneezes twice regularly every birthday. He will be fourteen next April, if not thrown back by illness. *Paulo post futuere, Verb. sap. Jam satis. Whack row de row; such is life.*

'P.S. (by the Editor).—We have just heard that he has been grossly deceived in *the boy*, in whom he has *believed* for so many years.'

Soon afterwards came a letter, which was very welcome, for we were ever on the look-out for new plays:

'General Post Office, *June* 2, 1868.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Is there any use in my finishing a comedy which I have on hand, and submitting it to you? Of course it should stand on its merits, but I have so much work that I would not go on with it if you were engaged, say, two-deep. —Sincerely yours, EDMUND YATES.'

We heard the first act read, and decided to produce the comedy during our next season.

On June 20th, to eke out the season, we revived *Caste* for a few weeks, Montague replacing Frederick Younge (who was then

managing the country company) as George D'Alroy. The heat became more and more tropical, and we closed the theatre on July 25th. On the evening of the 27th we played the first act of *Caste* at Covent Garden for the benefit of William Harrison, the celebrated tenor. We wrongly guessed the time our item in the long programme would be given, and I remember an eccentric-looking trio, formed by Hare, dressed as the gas-fitter; Arthur Sketchley, in evening dress (ready for 'Mrs. Brown at the Play' between the acts); and myself as Captain Hawtree, walking over to the Opera Hotel in Bow Street in the dusk of an intensely hot evening, and asking for brandies and sodas, to the amazement of the occupants of the coffee-room, who could not understand Hare's familiarity with his companions, for he looked a veritable gasman.

Part of my time was taken up in the study of Tom Stylus, as we had arranged to re-open the theatre with *Society*, and I had resolved to resign my original part of Daryl to Montague.

We took a little old-fashioned furnished house this year at Broadstairs, and passed nearly the whole of our holiday very quietly there. Our chief amusement was driving in a mail phaeton, which, during our stay, fairly scoured the neighbourhood, and became well known on all the turnpike roads. The great heat continued, which was pleasant enough in idleness.

An eccentric man who had been employed as a dresser in the theatre we took with us to Broadstairs as an indoor-servant, chiefly to give him the advantage of sea-air after a long illness, most of which he had recently passed in St. Mary's Hospital. We several times saw him there, and one day asked him if he knew what had really been the matter with him. He replied quite promptly, 'I'm afraid, sir, I don't; but I think what I had in my throat, the gentleman in the next bed has had in his stomach!' For fear we might be accused of appropriating an old *Punch* story, somewhat differently told, let us add that we supplied our friend George Du Maurier with the notion for one of his incomparable sketches, with which, years ago, he illustrated it.

Edmund Yates came down and stayed with us to read the second act of his comedy. We were disappointed, but hoped the third would put things straight, both with regard to plot and play.

One short week snatched from the peace of Broadstairs was passed in Paris in the full glare of an August sun, at the then most excellent Hôtel du Helder. This was in the days of the Empire—in fact, the very time of the Emperor's *fête*-day. *Le Duc Job* was being acted at the Français, and Got was then young enough to play the hero. *L'Abîme*, a French version of *No Thoroughfare*, by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, which had recently been played with immense success at the Adelphi, was the attraction at the Vaudeville, then situated on the Place de la Bourse, with Pierre Burton the elder in the part Fechter played in London.

Our eccentric manservant expressed his views upon the invest-

ment of half a franc to see the moon from the big telescope in the Place Vendôme in something like this fashion : 'What did I think of it, sir? well, sir, it's very much like these furriners about other matters : they will have it that everything here is ever so much better than everything in our country. Now, I don't see much difference between Paris and London ; they burn a bit more gas, it's true, and perhaps it's a bit gayer. Oh, about the moon, sir ! Well, it's not a bad moon—it's a good moon enough ; but I don't think it's a bit better than our's : in fact, I think our moon has a trifle the best of it !'

Back from the glare and heat of Paris, at this mistaken season of the year, to calm and rest in our Thanet cottage ; there to linger on the cliffs and sands in the hot noontide, and to ride or drive in the welcome evenings till summoned by the prompter.

A STORY BY MRS. BANCROFT.

When we who live and work in smoky London, with its thick slate-pencil sky, frowning, as it were, upon our busy, restless life, go into the peaceful country, what a contrast it is ! The noiseless, restful country, with its soothing still air as welcome as a down-pillow to a weary head. But even in the midst of its tranquillity, a history now and then of painful and romantic interest can be found. Misfortune is ubiquitous, and knows no 'With your leave, or by your leave.' The following episode happened during this holiday : in my country wanderings I often try to know something of the humbler folk, by going into their houses and talking with them. I soon win my way into their confidences, and they delight to tell me the little histories nearest to their hearts, glad, doubtless, to find a sympathetic listener. Some of their tales are so strangely sad in their simplicity as to make me feel that the tellers were made of finer material than one might suppose, and that the stuff had perhaps been spoiled in the cutting out.

They would relate their stories in such unstudied simple language, that if an artist were by to give them colour, or a poet to embellish them with a cloak of eloquence, how it would spoil them, so touching are they in their honest truthfulness, while at other times they bear such a comic aspect (although the tellers of them are innocent of the fact) that for the life of me I cannot resist a smile, and would give worlds to be allowed to laugh outright ; but one must be cautious, for these poor people are often strangely sensitive.

One morning early I was walking on the beach with one of my married sisters, who passed this holiday with us, when our attention was attracted to a young fellow whom we both knew by going to his mother's cottage now and again and chatting with them there. He was hard at work, seemingly, taking a boat to pieces. As we approached he recognised us, and touched his cap. 'Morning, ladies,' he said. 'You seem very busy,' I remarked. 'What are

you doing?' 'Breaking up a boat, mum.' I looked closer, and was surprised to see that it was a new boat. 'What a pity!' I exclaimed. 'It appears quite new.' 'Yes, mum, it's new.' 'Badly made—something wrong about it, I suppose?' 'No, mum; as good and smart a boat as ever you see.' 'To whom did it belong?' 'To nobody, mum.' 'What do you mean?' 'Well, mum, when I say nobody, I means myself.' 'Well, you are somebody, surely?' 'I don't think I should be reckoned anybody. Nobody thinks much of me, and I don't think much of myself, maybe.' 'Is that why you are taking the boat to pieces?' 'Yes.'

I could see a history behind this, for the poor fellow uttered the last sentence with a shade of bitterness in his voice, and his face, which was by nature merry, wore an expression of sadness. We examined some of the pieces, and asked him to explain them to us. He was pleased at our curiosity, especially when my sister asked, 'Did you make the boat?' '*Yes.*' 'How clever you must be, for is it not a responsible thing to build a boat which is to carry safely so many human beings?' Then I added, with a smile, 'If boats could speak, what interesting stories they would tell, and how many lovers' vows might be repeated!' The young fellow looked hard at me, and said, 'Yes; but this one shall tell no love-story, for I'm breaking of it up, you see.'

I looked farther, and pointing to a fragment on which *Alice* was painted in bright blue letters, I remarked, 'Oh! I see, you called the boat *Alice*—a pretty name. I am fond of the name of *Alice*.' He fixed his eyes on the name, and yet seemed to be looking far off. After a pause he said dreamily, 'Yes; it *is* pretty, and I—love it too—leastways, I *did*—and—yes, I love it still.' He bit his lips, and I could see a well of tears behind his words. There was a quiet dignity in his voice and manly suffering in his face that made me hesitate to intrude further on what I felt to be some grief.

I broke the brief silence by saying gently, 'Forgive me, I am so sorry.' I was about to go, when he said quickly, 'Don't go, mum. It's strange that you ladies should 'a happened to come to-day like this, just at the time when I was sadder than I've been since a year agone. You've been kind to my old mother, and 'ave give me lots a good advice about my drinkin' 'abits, which ain't so much my fault, if you know'd all about it.' He looked round to see that there was no one near enough to interrupt us, and said, 'Would you mind listening to me a while, ladies? It's very relievin' to get some one to take a little interest in one now and ag'in. I've nobody but my old mother, and she knows nothing of my troubles, for I've told her nothin' of 'em.'

We sat down on the beach, and could see that he had a serious history to tell, for he reflected for a moment, as if to gulp down his emotion. 'If I smoke I can talk better. Will you let me smoke? Thankee.' He filled his pipe, and, after a few whiffs, went on in his Kentish dialect:

'Little more nor a year ago I was the 'appiest chap in these parts, for I loved a girl and she loved me. I was twenty-five then, and she was eighteen. She was that pretty, with blue eyes, so bright and true, as if heaven was inside 'em, and they couldn't tell a lie. We was engaged and goin' to be married. I 'ad bought and made from time to time bits of things for furnishin' a cottage a mile or two out yonder, for I'm a bit 'andy in carpenterin' and the like. I was that 'appy, I could 'ardly sleep, mum—she filled my 'ead noight and day. All at once a dandyfied young chap come here with a kind of tutor they called a "coach," what teaches young fellars to be gentlemen, you know, mum. She didn't know she was so pretty till he told her; he filled her mind with vain notions, and she begun a-lookin' at 'erself all day long in the lookin'-glass, and dressin' of 'erself more gay like. She was leavin' off being the simple lass I loved; she looked to me like a boat a-driftin' away somewhere, and I was losin' sight of her. This fellar was allus a-runnin' after her and givin' her things, so I made up my mind to marry her outright, although I was poor, and it was 'ard to live. All at once, one mornin', quite sudden, they both ran away.' His voice failed him here, and after pausing for a second or two he added, 'A lump comes into my throat now and agin, mum. I 'eerd no more of 'er, for I never moved a step to follar her. I was sick in my 'eart, and it seemed chilled loik; but my old mother had to be seen to and took care of, so I up and set to work, without telling the mother anything except that my girl 'ad gone to a place in London. Well, things was prosperous with me, and every stroke of work I did brought in money, and in a few months' time I was on the road to puttin' by tidy sums, and soon I had as much as a hundred pounds in the bank, for I allus had a mind for savin'. Two months ago, I 'eerd that the fellar 'ad deserted my poor gal, and she and her baby-choild was starvin'. So I took the little cottage we was to 'ave if she 'ad been true to me; I puts in the bits of furniture wot I'd got together, and a little more to make it comfortable. I've never spoken to 'er, and I never will, I take my oath; but so long as I live she shall never want. She has stopped me from being the good man I wanted to be, and we can't now never come together no more; but I can't put on one side the remembrance of what she might 'ave been to me. That boat I built for 'er and me, and christened it after her, *Alice*. I painted the name in blue, because it was the colour of her eyes, and, in a drinkin' fit last night, I began a-breakin' of it up, as she 'as broken up my life.'

He was quite overcome, and, with his arm raised to his eyes, cried like a child. After a pause, he said, 'And this is why I drink a bit at times, ladies; it's a bad habit, and I'll try to follow your good advice and give it up. I can but try; but, after all, it 'ardly matters!'

How near akin are truth and fiction! We lived again in the

sorrows of Ham Peggoty and Little Em'ly ; and almost under the shadow of 'Bleak House,' where Dickens stayed so long, we had listened to this pathetic story.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEASON OF 1868-69.

Reproduction of *Society*—A new comedietta, *Atchi*—A stage-struck young gentleman is given an engagement—*Tame Cats*—Mrs. Bancroft's macaw—Charles Collette's first appearance—A soldier's story—*Society* restored to the bills—An instance of plagiarism—Production of *School*—Its remarkable success—Death of Robert Keeley—First morning performance at the Prince of Wales's—A letter from Shirley Brooks—The Garrick Club—A dream in the smoking-room—Arthur Cecil—Removal to the Grove-End Road—Charles Dickens's last visit to the Prince of Wales's.

BEGUN BY MR. BANCROFT.

It may be of interest to note here, in contrast to the charges of the present day, that the price of admission to the stalls was raised at the beginning of this season from six to seven shillings, to the dress-circle from four to five shillings, and to the pit from eighteen-pence to two shillings ; although there will be more to say on this subject presently. We resumed work on September 21st, with a revival of our first important success ; but we had new material in view, as Edmund Yates and T. W. Robertson were both writing for us, the first-named being engaged on the last act of his accepted comedy, which we had arranged should be the next production, the author of *Caste* agreeing to be prepared with a work to follow it. *Society* was preceded by a new comedietta, written by J. Maddison Morton, called *Atchi* (the sound of a sneeze). Montague and Blakeley acted in this, the little piece being also the medium for Miss Carlotta Addison's first appearance at our theatre. On this revival of Robertson's comedy the principal characters were cast as follows : Lord Ptarmigant, Mr. Hare ; Lord Cloudwrays, M.P., Mr. Terriss ; Sidney Daryl, Mr. H. J. Montague ; Mr. John Chodd, sen., Mr. W. Blakeley ; Mr. John Chodd, jun., Mr. J. Clarke ; Tom Stylus, Mr. Bancroft ; Olinthus O'Sullivan, D.C.L., Mr. H. W. Montgomery ; Lady Ptarmigant, Mrs. Buckingham White (her first appearance at this theatre) ; Maud Hetherington, Miss Carlotta Addison.

During the previous summer we were constantly told by a maid-servant that 'a young gentleman had called,' who seemed very persistent about seeing us. One day, on returning from a walk, the girl informed me that 'the young gentleman' had pushed past her and walked into our little drawing-room, where he then was. I joined our visitor rather angrily, but was soon disarmed by the frank manner of a very young man, who, within five minutes, in the

course of conversation, pointed to the window of a house opposite and said, 'That's the room I was born in.' (We then lived in a little villa in St. John's Wood.) Of course 'the young gentleman' was stage-struck, and 'wanted to go upon the stage,' adding that 'he was resolved that we should give him an engagement.' His courage and, if I may say it, his cool perseverance, amused and amazed me; the very force of his determined manner conquered me, and the upshot of our interview was that I did engage him. His name was William Terriss, and Lord Cloudwrays, in *Society*, was the part in which he made his first appearance on a London stage.

It was this season that Mr. Edward Hastings first joined us as prompter and assistant stage-manager, a position he filled with us during the greater part of our management. Mr. Hastings, who, I believe, has been connected with the stage for half a century, and chiefly in leading London theatres, once told me, I remember, that I was the most *literal* actor he had ever met throughout his long experience as a prompter. I know myself to be so exact, that when I alter any words in a part intentionally, I always have those I intend to substitute entered in the prompt-book.

The programme, especially with Mrs. Bancroft's name absent from it, was not a particularly attractive one, although it proved a satisfactory stop-gap, for the expenses of the little theatre were a very different matter in those days, being, in fact, about half of what they reached at the end of our fifteen years there.

Although the following letter refers to a domestic matter, it is so very characteristic of the writer, and our old friend, that we do not hesitate to give it the short space it will take up:

'5, Conduit Street, *November* 2, 1868.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—Accept our united congratulations. May the infant grow as clever as its mamma, and as tall as its papa, and as good as both!—With all good wishes, believe me, my dear Bancroft, yours very sincerely, H. J. BYRON.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

Meanwhile Edmund Yates had finished his comedy. We were, of course, in constant communication, which was rendered easier by the fact of his living at the time not far off in Baker Street. The eccentric manservant, who has been before mentioned, could never master certain names. That of Yates was especially a stumbling-block owing to an impediment in his speech, and by this man our old friend was always spoken of as 'the gentleman from Baker Schtreet' (while 'Ponsonby' grew in his mouth to 'Punchemberry'). *Tame Cats*, as the new comedy was called, did not, we began to fear, come out well at rehearsal; as is by no means unusual; scenes which had read well, *acted* tamely (no pun intended). The play was produced on Saturday, December 12th. The cast was a good

one, as an extract from the bill will show, and we all worked bravely to make it a success: Mr. Waverham, Mr. H. J. Montague; Mortimer Wedgwood, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Tweedie, Mr. W. Blakeley; Charles Hampton, Mr. Charles Collette (his first appearance); Ezra Stead, Mr. Hare; Biddles, Mr. H. W. Montgomery; Mrs. Waverham, Miss Carlotta Addison; Mrs. Langley, Miss Marie Wilton; Mrs. Joppet, Mrs. Buckingham White; Annie Temple, Miss Augusta Wilton; Ellis, Miss Ada Coates.

NOTES BY MRS. BANCROFT.

While considering how best to make the scene of the first act, the garden of a pretty villa on the Thames, as effective and natural as possible, it occurred to us that a macaw with his gay plumage would be a beautiful bit of colour on the well-kept lawn. We purchased one of the handsomest birds I ever saw, and had a large stand made for him, which the bird seemed to appreciate immensely, especially when its bright tin dishes were well filled. A chain was attached to one of his legs; a degradation to which he took kindly, as, probably, the arrangement was not new to him. When 'Mac' was placed one morning on the stage and introduced to the company, he lost no time in making it understood that he preferred them at a distance. No 'Scratch a poll,' or 'Pretty dear,' or 'Kiss me,' seemed to impress the bird. Mr. Bancroft addressed him as 'Well, old man,' a familiarity which he resented by shrieks and by performing a kind of war-dance on his perch. The fact of being spoken to by a manager did not impress Mr. Macaw with respect in the least. As time went on, the bird grew more accustomed to his new home, but would permit no one but me to go near him; in fact, his preference became somewhat of a nuisance, for the moment I left the room where he was kept, he made hideous noises until I returned, and then became languid with affection. I had complete power over him, and when the sound of my voice announced my arrival every morning, he grew quite unmanageable until I went to soothe him. I was not sorry that he took this fancy to me, and arranged in the business of the scene to play with him, which, had he acted his part properly, would have been effective enough. He rehearsed admirably, and appeared quite reconciled to his position. At last the eventful night came; the scene was set, the overture was over, and the bell rang for the curtain to rise on a charming little scene, with *Mac*, in all his glory of colour, perched on his stand. But no sooner was the curtain up, than the crowded house, the glare of gas, and the applause, so alarmed the bird that, with his huge wings spread out, he sprang to the ground and waddled round and round the stage with deafening shrieks, dragging his stand (which made as much noise as a hansom cab) after him. The more the audience laughed, the louder the bird screamed. When at last he found his way to the wings, no one dared touch him but me; so in the midst of the confusion I took hold of 'Mac,' and got him out of the way as

quickly as possible. This was Mr. Macaw's first and last appearance, and when he left the theatre the next day, the dressers, carpenters, and other servants, hailed his departure in not the politest language. He had, I believe, fastened his beak in their garments more than once.

I presented 'Mac' to the Zoological Gardens, where, I believe, he is still to be seen : reflecting, doubtless, on his brief engagement at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

Hare had to appear in *Tame Cats* as a shabby and disreputable creature who was a returned convict ; he was, as usual, immensely excited about his 'get up,' which was mutually discussed over one of the many delightful dinners of those early days. I remember an amusing incident of his hunting in all sorts of back streets for some characteristic clothes, and after walking round and round a strange man who wore a very odd-looking hat, which Hare thought priceless, at last striking a bargain for its purchase with the bewildered owner, and carrying it off in triumph, with some horrible rags of garments which had to be well baked in an oven before they could be worn.

CONTINUED BY MR. BANCROFT.

The evening was not a cheerful one. The part of Mortimer Wedgwood, a mock poet and one of the 'Tame Cats' of the house, was resented by the audience and critics, some of whom mistook it for a caricature of the genius of one far above such ridicule, Algernon Charles Swinburne, no such idea having entered the head of either author or actor. We always thought the play, although by no means of the first rank, was harshly received. Cat-calls, and feline sounds of many kinds, followed the final fall of the curtain, and we felt the play was doomed. Some years afterwards, while on a visit to the Temple, Goring — a charming river-side residence he then occupied — Edmund Yates asked us if we still had the prompt copy of his comedy, adding that he should like to read it. The book was hunted up and sent to him. In a few days it came back with this verdict : 'My dear B., it's poor stuff, and well deserved its fate.'

It was in this play that Charles Collette made his first appearance as a professional actor. He had for some time been the life and soul of his old regiment (3rd Dragoon Guards), *en amateur*, and his brother officers rallied round him, naturally enough, on the occasion of this new departure. They did their old comrade little good, however, by the vehemence of their reception of all he said and did in the small part of a Government clerk. The first words spoken by him were accidentally apropos enough, 'There's nobody about ; I wonder what they're saying of me at the War Office?' To the amazement of the rest of the audience, the friendly dragoons received this simple speech as the finest joke ever penned.

A story of his old soldiering-days, which Collette told us years ago, may be allowed a place here. A young fellow had been raised from the ranks and given a commission in another regiment. Before joining, according to custom, he was invited to a farewell dinner by the officers of his old regiment, being placed, as the guest of the evening, on the colonel's right, and helped to all the dishes first. He was a fine young fellow, but little used as yet to the ways of the polite world and the manners of other dinner-tables than the humble sergeants' mess of those days. The colonel, one of the truest type of gentlemen, did his best to put his young friend as much as possible at ease. The soup was served, and then came a servant to the guest's side, holding a large bowl which contained simply lumps of ice. The weather was hot, for this happened in India, and cold drinks were greatly in request. The young fellow stared at the bowl. The servant asked, 'Ice, sir?' The colonel chatted merrily to him on his left; others of the officers began to see the dilemma. 'Ice, sir?' again said the mess-waiter. The young new-made officer, in ignorant desperation, took some of the ice and put it in his soup. A smile began to play on the faces of one or two of the younger officers, when the bowl was offered to the colonel, who went on talking to his guest, and now, without ceasing or moving a muscle, *also dropped a piece of ice into his soup-plate*. Those next either took their cue from him or let the bowl pass, and the young fellow breathed a sigh of relief in the thought that he had done the right thing. If ever soldier deserved the Victoria Cross, the colonel of that regiment did.

Robertson, we found, had very nearly completed his comedy, so we withdrew *Tame Cats* after eleven performances, and as a stop-gap until he should be quite ready, and the rehearsals completed, we restored *Society* to the bills. During this brief revival Mrs. Buckingham White was suddenly taken ill, and could not act her part of old Lady Ptarmigant. Mrs. Bancroft, in the emergency, took her place, and I have rarely seen anything more ludicrous than she looked; every impromptu effort to produce the semblance of age only added to her then girlish appearance.

When *School*, as he christened the successor to *Play*, was read to us by Robertson, we were delighted with it, and were also responsible, through certain suggestions offered to him, for the addition of one of its most effective scenes—that between Jack Poyntz and Naomi—which is so admirable in contrast to the 'milk-jug scene,' which it immediately followed, and of which the *doyen* of the critics, John Oxenford, wrote: 'The dialogue between the young lord and Bella, while they converse in the moonlight contemplating their own strongly-cast shadows, and fancifully commenting upon them, is replete with the prettiest conceits, in which it is hard to say whether wit or sentiment has the mastery.' The comedy was read to the company by the author—as only he could read his plays—on Boxing Day, and the parts were then studied as

quickly as possible. Unfortunately, we lost the services of Mr. Blakeley, an actor whose special comic talent we had long thought highly of and hoped to retain, who failed to see the fun of Dr. Sutcliffe and its suitability to his method. When Mr. Blakeley decided, to our regret, to resign the part, Mr. Addison, for years a distinguished actor of 'old men' with Kean at the Princess's, and the Wigans at the Olympic, was engaged to take his place, and for a long time remained a prominent member of our company.

Tremendous efforts were made by all concerned to stem the brief current of bad luck which was running our way. The scenery was painted by that gifted artist Hawes Craven, who revels in such subjects as the 'glade in early autumn,' which was especially beautiful, and he worked long hours to be ready for us.

An incident may be worth recording here as some proof how innocently a writer may plagiarize. Robertson came to me one day when the rehearsals were well advanced, and wished to introduce a line or two in the soliloquy I had to speak while sitting in the swing in the third act. He said, 'I went to a theatre last night, and was there introduced to a lady, who told me that, although I had forgotten her, she well remembered me, reminding me where we had met before, adding that I then made use of these words, "When Nature makes a pretty woman, she puts all the goods into the shop-window;" whether I ever did say them or not I haven't the least idea, but they seem to me quite good enough for Jack Poyntz, and will fit in with the sentiment of your speech.' A long time after, when reading Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man*, to see if we thought it worth revival, I found this sentence from the mouth of Miss Richland: 'Our sex are like poor tradesmen, that put all their best goods to be seen at the windows.'

We felt, as the work progressed, very confident as to the result, and a few days before the production, in a letter to an old friend, I said, 'We are on the eve of the greatest success we have yet had.' We could not, of course, foresee that it would turn out to 'beat the record,' as they say, of all our productions; heading, as we shall take a later opportunity to show, all the more powerful plays we have presented to the public in the course of our career. The first announcement of our new play ran thus:

On Saturday, January 16, 1869,

WILL BE ACTED, FOR THE FIRST TIME, AN ORIGINAL COMEDY, CALLED

SCHOOL,

By T. W. Robertson, Author of 'Society,' 'Ours,' 'Caste,' and 'Play.'

LORD BEAUFOY	MR. H. J. MONTAGUE.
DR. SUTCLIFFE	MR. ADDISON. (His first appearance at this Theatre.)
BEAU FARINTOSH . . .	MR. HARE.
JACK POYNTZ	MR. BANCROFT.
MR. KRUX	MR. F. GLOVER.

MRS. SUTCLIFFE	Mrs. Buckingham White.
NAOMI TIGHE	Miss Marie Wilton.
BELLA	Miss Carlotta Addison.
TILLY	Miss Augusta Wilton.

Act. I.—The Glade: Recreation. Act II.—The House: Examination. Act III.—The Grounds: Flirtation. Act IV.—The Grounds: Realization.

For the outline of the plot of this comedy, the author has acknowledged his indebtedness to a German play by Roderich Benedix, called *Aschenbrödel* (Cinderella), which doubtless accounts for the anomaly of finding a resident usher in a girls' school, as well as for the parody on the pumpkin and the glass-slipper in the last act.

The demand for seats was extraordinary, and such as we had never known before; extra stalls were added to a considerable number, and the receipts of the theatre much increased; opening, in fact, before us a vista of prosperity such as we had not dreamed of.

The critics were unanimous in a wealth of praise for theatre, author, and actors. The *Times* review of the production began with these flattering words: 'The fact is not to be denied, that the production of a new comedy by Mr. T. W. Robertson at the theatre which, once obscure, has become, under the direction of Miss Marie Wilton, the most fashionable in London, is now to be regarded as one of the most important events of the dramatic year.' It was plainly evident that a long career of success was assured to the new play.

A great comedian of days gone by, Robert Keeley, passed away in the early part of this year, February 3rd, at his house in Brompton—a part of London in former times greatly favoured by actors, and in which the Keeleys had lived for many years. Mrs. Keeley still happily survives, although now more than eighty years old, having been born, as she rejoices in saying, in November, 1805—a fact made all the more interesting to me by a letter I received from her in November, 1875, in which she says, 'I shall be seventy to-morrow.' Without these admissions the fact would never be credited, for she still looks marvellously youthful and strong; only last Christmas Day (1887), indeed, Mrs. Keeley stood for hours on the stage of the Victoria Theatre, distributing the new sixpences which a kind friend had sent for a thousand poor theatrical children.

There is an old, and I dare say well-worn, theatrical anecdote, which was told to me years ago, of Keeley, by Leigh Murray (I once saw them act together in the Camp at Chobham), but, alas for the sake of veracity, I have since heard the story fathered on Sheridan! However, I will in a few words relate it as I for years put faith in it. The name of a firm which, as fruiterers, supplied the household was Berry and Son. On one occasion the junior Berry wrongly sent some account to the actor, who answered the application for the money in this doggerel:

'I say, here's a small mull-Berry.
Why send in this wrong bill-Berry,
Which is not from me due-Berry?
Your father, the elder-Berry,
Would not be such a goose-Berry;
But you must not look black-Berry,
For I don't care a straw-Berry!'

Edmund Yates also tells, in his inimitable way, a story of Keeley which, perhaps, he thought too old and threadbare for a place in his 'Recollections.' I will be less modest, for the sake of a younger generation. The actor once bought a fancy work-basket as a present for his wife, which turned out to have some flaw in it, or to be not so well made as he expected. Keeley took the purchase back, and complained very much at the shop where he got it—which, we'll suppose, was that of the well-known firm of, say, Larkins and Potter—and insisted upon seeing one of the partners. Upon the approach of a mild gentleman-like person, who asked his cause of complaint, Keeley indignantly repeated his annoyance, and wound up by saying, 'If you are Larkins, damn Potter! but if you are Potter, damn Larkins!'

It may be curious to mention here the first morning performance we ever gave at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, which was on March 6th, in the height of the run of *School*, when all the seats were booked every night long in advance. The experiment, however, was so novel, that it only attracted a moderate house in the daytime, and it was not for some years that *matinées* became popular.

The following letter will explain itself. I also received the news from two other friends and old members of the club, who both have long been known as lovers of the drama—Sir George Armytage, and Colonel (now General) Du Plat:

'Garrick Club, *Saturday*, *April* 3, 1869.
'3.55 p.m. Rain. Wind, S.W.

'MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—As your proposer here, I have the great pleasure of informing you that you have just been unanimously elected to the Garrick Club. Trusting that this will not render you *unduly* undomestic, I add, with my congratulations to you, my best regards to Mrs. Bancroft.—Ever yours faithfully, SHIRLEY BROOKS.'

As my mind wanders back over the time that has passed—now fast approaching twenty years—since as a young actor I received the honour of election to the Garrick Club, I think gratefully of the many happy hours I have passed inside its walls, and of the many good friends I have made there.

My memory, alas! recalls names and faces to be no more recalled in any other way. Let me light a cigar in the smoking-room, and, at peace in one of its big armchairs, invoke 'King Nod,' and visit his majesty's dominions in the land of dreams. Soon do

I see the forms of Wyndham Smith and Andrew Arcedeckne seated together by the fire, and hear their interchange of stories ; presently they are joined by phantoms of two painters, Elmore and O'Neil, and afterwards by 'Johnny' Deane. Over an early dinner I hear Phelps telling of 'a splendid day's fishing ;' whilst Charles Mathews whispers to me that 'the only time in his life he began to get fat was when he took to riding.' I picture in the card-room the ever-kindly presence of Lord Anglesey (to whose hospitality I was for years indebted for a perfect view of the Derby from his private stand) ; the strongly-marked features and deep-toned voice of Sir Charles Taylor ; the merry eye and musical brogue of Charles Lever (home on leave from his consulate, and keenly interested in the Tichborne trial) ; the gruff exterior which hid the soft and tender heart of Anthony Trollope ; the occasional visits of courtly James Clay (the former companion of Lord Beaconsfield in foreign travel, and a monarch at the whist-table) ; and the more frequent presence of Sir George Colthurst. I see kindly 'Joe' Langford and dear old 'Bunsby' (Merewether, Q.C.) arrive for their rubber ; 'cutting-in' with gentle, pipe-loving Edward Breedon (who bore so little of the aspect of having once been a dandy in the Guards), the great novelist who wrote 'Hard Cash ;' and Dr. Duplex, who once prescribed for Edmund Kean—who complete the table.

Higher still the smoke of my now half-burnt cigar ascends, and in its fumes I picture again delightful visits to the billiard-room, where I was first welcomed (although no player) by its constant *habitué*, Captain Synge. Over a crowded contest at 'black pool,' I see the portly form and hear the jovial laugh of General Napier ; in turn comes the fine head of E. S. Dallas, suggesting portraits of Norwegian kings ; by his side is the handsome face of the 'Amiable Brigand,' as some of us for years knew Palgrave Simpson ; while next, fresh with some gossip from Pall Mall, is the cheery 'younger son,' as, until his sad and sudden end, Napier Sturt spoke always of himself. Other forms I see, many of their names being well known to the world ; but most of them are, happily, still with us. As I go downstairs again I linger for a chat with my kind proposer, Shirley Brooks, fresh from a Wednesday *Punch* dinner (to talk with whom but for a minute meant to be sure of catching some pearl of wit), or to listen to a keen and caustic criticism from Tom Taylor, so soon to be his successor in the editorial chair. In the hall I interrupt two serjeants 'learned in the law,' by names Ballantine and Parry, who are talking out the points of that day's conflict in the Common Pleas ; and, as I leave, am awakened by my surprise at meeting Henry Byron, whose rare visits to the club, he laughingly said, made his annual subscription mean 'five guineas a wash' !

It will, I think, be interesting to note here, as it occurred at this time, a visit Hare and I received one evening, in the dressing-room we shared for years, from Arthur Cecil, asking our opinion as to

whether he should, or should not, give up his private position (he was then secretary to some company), and accept an offer he had received from Mr. and Mrs. German Reed to join them in their well-known entertainment at the Gallery of Illustration. Our advice was that he should enter the players' ranks ; if that opinion had any influence upon our old friend's mind, although we may have robbed one company of a good servant, we certainly gave another company a valued recruit and a faithful servant to the public.

The long career of a successful play somewhat ties the pen, and leaves little to relate of the theatre while it brightly but monotonously occupies its boards. *School* ran on through frost and snow, through fair weather and foul, to the same record of crowded houses, owing, doubtless, some share of its popularity to the success which had attended previous productions by the same author ; for although, as we have said, it grew to be the greatest favourite of all Robertson's works, it cannot be compared in a dramatic sense with *Caste*, nor does it contain a scene to equal the second act of *Ours*. The public, however, being masters of the situation, chose to raise it to the position we have indicated, and it was not for us to quarrel with so pleasant a verdict.

Events outside our theatrical life are but little dwelt on in this book, unless they chance to deal with other public characters, and so lay claim to more general interest. Our continued good fortune both as actors and managers greatly enlarged our circle of friends in the world of literature and art, and, no doubt, was the key that opened the doors of many pleasant houses to us. Much of the happiness of our lives has come to us in this way, and later on our journey through these pages we may now and again refer to names made known throughout the world, whose owners, but for the calling we have followed and have tried to serve, we never might have met —at least in intimacy.

In the spring of the year, when the apple-blossoms made its big old-fashioned garden look beautiful, we saw a house in the Grove-End Road, near our little villa, which we felt justified in taking on a lease, and soon after occupied.

We also resolved to redecorate, and in part refurnish, the theatre in the summer on a more sumptuous scale than we yet had been able to afford ; and the work for this was put in hand, being for months, in fact, preparing, so that the change might be made in the briefest time we could snatch from the play's success. Alterations and decorations for our new home, and the work in progress for the theatre, kept us busy. The summer soon arrived : still *School* ran on its unbroken course, and we resolved to break the run for a few evenings only, elaborate arrangements being made for the completion of the redecoration by relays of men working all through the twenty-four hours of each day and night. We did not end the season, therefore, until Saturday, August 28th, on which

night Charles Dickens—proving to be, alas! his farewell visit to the theatre—was among the audience, it being the hundred and ninety-second performance of *School*.

CHAPTER X.

THE SEASON OF 1869-70.

School resumed—Address to the public on the improvements in the theatre—Letter from Mr. (now Sir) Frederic Leighton—Robertson's health failing—Incident on a foggy night—Letter from Charles Mathews—His benefit at Covent Garden—His speech on proposing his own health—Death of Leigh Murray—Charles Dickens's readings: two special mornings for the actors—A home sorrow—Robertson very ill—Montague's secession from the company; engagement of Coghlan—A new comedy, *M. P.*, produced—Criticism by Tom Taylor—Great success—Special morning performance of the *School for Scandal* and *Married Life* at Drury Lane—Mr. Bancroft as Sir Benjamin Backbite—Death of Charles Dickens—His letter to Mrs. Bancroft—His influence on funerals—Hare's *matinée* at the Princess's Theatre—At Scarborough—Henry Fothergill Chorley—The Franco-German War.

AFTER a very brief holiday, one day even of which was spent in London looking after the progress of the new decorations, we were back in town again, the run of *School* being resumed on Saturday, September 11th, when the following address was issued:

'Although I have closed my theatre for only eleven nights, I trust that the decorations with which I have embellished it during that short time—but which for months have been the subject of much anxious care—will be accepted as some proof of how sincerely I appreciate the great reputation of which the performances I have had the privilege to offer for public entertainment have been considered worthy. That reputation I shall jealously guard, and have the pleasure to announce that the brilliant pen to which I am indebted for *Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, and *School*, is already at work upon a new comedy—to be submitted to your judgment when our *School*, which next week will reach its two-hundredth representation, finally breaks up.

'While altering and improving the theatre, I have added to the comfort of future audiences, and in the accomplishment of my pet project—abolishing the ordinary position of the orchestra—have been actuated by the same desire.

'In conclusion, may I venture to encourage the hope—always remembering the invaluable aid of the charming comedies which I have had the good fortune to produce, and the talents of those whom it is my pride to call the members of my company—that I have made some progress towards the advancement of the beautiful art to which my life has been devoted?—MARIE WILTON.'

This was the first time the orchestra had been so placed as to be hidden from the sight of the audience. The space formerly occupied by the musicians was filled by rockwork, with running water, and a fernery. The new embellishments, which were mainly of light blue satin and of a sumptuous character then unknown in theatres (strong in contrast to the simple decorations they replaced), were very much liked, and we think had a share in maintaining the career of success which the performance of *School* still enjoyed. The high authority of the accomplished President of the Royal Academy will excuse our printing the following kind note on this subject:

'Holland Park Road.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—A line to say that I think your theatre quite the dandiest thing I ever saw. I should have gone round to tell you so after the play, but that I had a complete extinction of voice, and could therefore not have made myself audible.

'How well it went off last night, and how dead tired of it *you* must be! not so *we*.—Believe me, with kind remembrance to Bancroft, yours very truly, FRED. LEIGHTON.'

It was about this time that we first detected signs of failing health in Robertson, who showed great difficulty in beginning work upon the play he destined to be our next production; although as yet we had no idea that he was already in the early grip of what was soon to prove a mortal and long-enduring illness. Fortunately the continued success of the existing programme allowed us to refrain from spurring him on to work, and to let him take things easily.

The two hundred and fiftieth performance of *School* deserves recording. It fell on November 17th, and was honoured by a second visit from the Prince and Princess of Wales. The evening was terribly foggy, and during the performance it became so exceptionally dense and thick that at the close the streets were dangerous to traverse. At eleven o'clock the royal carriages, after great difficulty—the coachmen having once lost their way in Clifford Street, through mistaking that turning for Conduit Street—arrived safely, surrounded by a large body of the E Division of police, all bearing torches, who so escorted the Prince and Princess to Marlborough House. Our own journey home was a long and dangerous one, and many among the audience must have met with difficulties.

The following letter will best tell its tale:

'Edinburgh, *November* 27, 1869.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—You will never guess what I am going to ask you, and still less why I ask it.

'Will you and the principal members of your company come and play me a scene from a short act at Covent Garden on Tuesday

morning, January 4th? "Good gracious!" you exclaim, "what on earth for?" Because it is my farewell benefit, previous to my leaving for Australia! I sail for Melbourne on the 31st of January. If after this you can resist, if you do not with tears in your eyes falter out, "I consent," you are made of sterner stuff than I give you credit for. Give my kind regards to Bancroft, and ask him to join in the good work. Say what you will play, and rely on it that the "approbation of our kind friends before us" will be certain.

'A line to 25, Pelham Crescent will reach me; and in the meantime I will meditate on the most gracious form in which I can express my thanks.—Faithfully yours, C. J. MATHEWS.'

The performance, which was in many ways memorable, took place on Tuesday morning, January 4th, at Covent Garden Theatre, before a most brilliant audience—all the leading actors of the day appearing in various selections. The principal members of our own company played the examination scene from *School*, in which Naomi Tighe could not resist improvising an extra question to be put to her by Dr. Sutcliffe as to 'what she considered the most valuable possession of Australia?' The answer, 'Charles Mathews,' was, of course, a good one for the occasion, and appealed at once to the sympathies of the audience.

A few nights afterwards a complimentary and brilliantly attended banquet was given at Willis's Rooms to Charles Mathews, at which he presided himself, and, as chairman, proposed his own health.

We extract a few sentences from a most amusing speech, delivered in his inimitable way:

'The most important task assigned to me has now to be fulfilled, and I rise to propose what is called the toast of the evening with a singular mixture of pleasure and trepidation. I was going to say that I was placed in not only a novel but an unprecedented position, by being asked to occupy the chair to-day. But it is not so. There is nothing new in saying that there is nothing new; and I find in the *Times* newspaper of October 3rd, 1798, an advertisement of a dinner given to Mr. Fox at the Shakespeare Tavern, Covent Garden, on the anniversary of his first election for Westminster. "The Hon. Charles James Fox in the chair." Here is a great precedent; and what was done in 1798 by Charles James Fox is only imitated in 1870 by Charles James Mathews. I venture to assert, and I think I may do so without vanity, that a fitter man than myself to propose the health of our guest could not be found; for I venture also emphatically to affirm that there is no man so well acquainted with the merits and demerits of that gifted individual as I am. I have been on the most intimate terms with him from his earliest youth. I have watched over and assisted his progress from childhood upwards, have shared in all his joys and griefs, and I assert boldly, and am proud to have this opportunity of publicly declaring, that there is not a man on earth for whom I entertain so sincere a

regard and affection. Indeed, I don't think I go too far in stating that he has an equal affection for me. He has come to me for advice over and over again, under the most embarrassing circumstances, and what is still more remarkable, he has always taken my advice in preference to that of anyone else.'

Needless to say that this speech was interrupted at every point by peals of laughter.

Another instance of Charles Mathews's delightful phase of humour occurred in a speech he made as chairman of one of the Royal Theatrical Fund dinners, when, with inimitable composure, he remarked: 'The late Douglas Jerrold once said to me that he did not despair of living to see the day when I should be found walking up Ludgate Hill on a muddy morning, with a cotton umbrella under my arm, to invest my funds in the Bank of England. I am sorry to say that Douglas Jerrold did not live to see that vision realized. The only step that I have advanced towards it is, that I have bought the umbrella.'

It was while Charles Mathews was being fêted, as his great talents and universal popularity deserved, that another delightful actor, much his junior, died, unhappily after long suffering, and in comparative obscurity—poor Leigh Murray, who passed away at the early age of forty-nine. We both had known him, and to know him meant soon to grow fond of him. Like so many of us, he had but one enemy—himself.

The sensation caused by Charles Dickens's readings had, some little time before, led to an influential theatrical meeting, and a petition to the great novelist to grant the actors an opportunity of hearing him by giving a reading in the morning, for this was long before the days of *matinées*, which were only then known to pantomimes. Dickens's love for everything dramatic prompted him in charming terms to acquiesce at once, but his serious illness prevented the fulfilment of the promise until this time, when two morning readings were announced at St. James's Hall. The first was the *Christmas Carol*, the second comprised *Boots at the Holly Tree Inn*, and the terrible 'Sykes and Nancy' selection from *Oliver Twist* (the strain and exertion of which, doubtless, through frequent repetition when his health was bad, went far towards killing him). Two vast audiences thronged the large hall. We were seated in the front row of chairs, and plainly saw the tears provoked by the wonderful reception the actors gave Dickens directly he stepped upon the platform. Those who had heard him often said he read as if inspired—certainly he never had a finer audience. We all seemed spellbound under his varying powers, and after this lapse of many years the emotions he so quickly in their turn aroused live in the memory, and will be there quite vividly while we have life. Feelings like these make one grateful to have, even for a few brief hours, fallen under the influence of his genius.

Matters simply of home life, merely joys or sorrows, have been

thought by both of us to have no claim to be recorded in this book; and if, for a moment, I (S. B. B.) raise the veil that shrouds such things, and allude in this paragraph to a wretchedness that befell us at the time, it is due to the still keen remembrance of a grief which—though briefly—interfered with my duties as an actor. A baby boy had recently been born to us. One night, while playing Jack Poyntz (her sister had taken my wife's place for some time), nearly at the end of the play, I was called from the stage and summoned home, a child-illness having quickly grown alarming. In a few hours the little being died, and, while we lived there, saddened the house in which he slept away his thirty days of life. The thoughts of those days that followed can be ever raised, and the ghosts of them can be never laid.

The same form of sorrow—and much at the same time—befell those living in the house adjoining ours. To mutual sympathy we then owed the acquaintance, and afterwards the friendship, of Admiral and Mrs. (now Sir Edward and Lady) Inglefield.

Robertson had now become very ill indeed, and, after several consultations with eminent physicians, we learnt in how dangerous a condition, from serious heart mischief, he truly was. He had finished three acts, out of four, of a new play to succeed *School*, which, having been acted at the time about three hundred and fifty nights—in those days an unprecedented 'run'—we felt should be soon withdrawn, so that in its turn it might still have life to bear revival. The invalid's health for awhile prevented his leaving his house, so that he was quite unable to go to the theatre, or face the fatigue of rehearsals. One of us (Mr. Bancroft) therefore undertook to read the play to the company; Mr. Coghlan, being at this time added to it, engaged to take the place of Mr. Montague, who had asked that he might be released in order to enter into the management with his and our friends, Thomas Thorne and David James, of a little theatre, the Vaudeville, recently built in the Strand, and which, with an excellent company, including Henry Irving, George Honey, and Ada Cavendish, they soon made popular.

The new comedy was received with enthusiasm by the company, and rehearsals were at once commenced. After a time, we felt a sense of weakness in the work—in spite of its delicate charm, its many Robertsonian beauties—and were distressed to find a growing fear lest it should not act so well as it had read. The end of the play was dictated by the author from his sick-bed, and bore the signs of his weakened condition. We felt strongly, in this sad state of things, that an adverse verdict might be fatal to the slender thread by which he held his life. No assurance from us will be needed to say that all concerned worked hard and with real affection to avert it.

If ever a play was snatched from failure, this one was. It was the first we rehearsed for so long a time as six weeks, and, towards the end, we used to go up to Haverstock Hill and show poor

Robertson, act by act, what we hoped to do with his work—he being a little better in the finer weather, and able to reach his drawing-room.

Almost until it had to be announced, the comedy remained unchristened, when a conversation between us, as we were driving to one of its rehearsals through the Regent's Park, led to an inspiration on the part of Mrs. Bancroft, who suggested that it should be called *M. P.* This bright idea was immediately telegraphed to cheer the author, who answered, 'Send the happy letters to the printer, and tell Marie I owe her five hundred pounds for them!'

School was withdrawn after three hundred and eighty-one performances, and might, we truly believe, have been played for another year, but 'that way madness lies.' So, on Shakespeare's birthday, we produced the new comedy with many fears and anxious forebodings for its fate.

On Saturday, April 23, 1870, *will be acted*

M. P.,

A NEW AND ORIGINAL COMEDY, BY T. W. ROBERTSON,

The Author of '*School*,' '*Play*,' '*Caste*,' '*Ours*,' *and* '*Society*.'

DUNSCOMBE DUNSCOMBE	MR. HARE.
CHUDLEIGH DUNSCOMBE	MR. COGHLAN.
TALBOT PIERS	MR. BANCROFT.
ISAAC SKOOME	MR. ADDISON.
MR. BRAN	MR. CHARLES COLLETTE.
MR. BRAY	MR. F. GLOVER.
MR. MULHOWTHER	MR. MONTGOMERY.
CECILIA DUNSCOMBE	MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.)
RUTH DEYBROOKE	MISS CARLOTTA ADDISON.

ACT I.—The Lawn: The Candidates. ACT II.—The Lawn: The Addresses. ACT III.—The Library: The Sale. ACT IV.—The 'Rose' Room at the British Lion, Bramlingdon: The Poll.

Our terrors were soon set at rest by a brilliant success, doubtless partly owing to the reputation achieved by our previous productions of the author's works. Poor Robertson's state, unable as he was to leave his bedroom, may be imagined. The best step we could at the moment take to relieve his great anxiety, was to despatch messengers in hot haste after every act with the good news of their reception. This success, we have no doubt, prolonged his life at least by months, and rekindled for awhile the little flicker of hope that was left to him.

So great was the demand for seats that the pretty rockwork and fernery were abolished, never to be reinstated, and a prosaic row of stalls reigned instead; these seats had now encroached very much on the space allotted to the pit, and could not have been otherwise added to.

We have no wish or intention to weary the reader with long press extracts, but a few words, with a special reference to the author, from an exhaustive article written by the accomplished pen of Tom Taylor, who, through an illness of John Oxenford's, replaced him on the *Times*, need no apology :

'Mr. Robertson has added another leaf to the garland he has so honestly and honourably won at this theatre. None of his "first nights," we should say, can have been more genuinely and pleasantly successful than that of his new comedy, *M. P.*, on Saturday. . . . In the way of light comedy there is nothing in London approaching the pieces and the *troupe* of the Prince of Wales's taken together. Author, actors, and theatre seem perfectly fitted for each other. . . . Paris itself furnishes no exact *pendant* to this theatre and these plays. The Gymnase would be, on the whole, the nearest parallel ; but the staple of pieces at that house is heavier and more solid than Mr. Robertson has created for the Prince of Wales's. These comedies are, indeed, so unlike other men's work, that they amount to a creation. Light as they are, there is in them an under-current of close observation and half-mocking seriousness which lift them above triviality. Mr. Robertson is perfectly seconded by his actors. Miss Marie Wilton is the actress who, of all now on the stage, has preserved most of the arch humour and shrewd significance of Mrs. Keeley, while her line of parts combines with these a refinement which in Mrs. Keeley's usual business would have been misplaced.'

The prosperous course pursued by *M. P.*—for success is ever a most potent drug—had even helped its suffering author to a gleam of apparent strength, which happily allowed him, after it had been played for a few weeks, to see and highly praise a performance of the comedy ; soon after which he was strong enough to go with Mrs. Robertson to the seaside, where he again began to write a little, and think much of works, as he hoped, to come.

A special performance of the *School for Scandal* and *Married Life* was given on May 14th, at Drury Lane, for the benefit of the moribund Dramatic College. The cast of the latter comedy included Webster, Buckstone, Toole, and the Kendals ; while Sheridan's masterpiece was acted by a strange mixture of the old and new schools, as follows : Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. Chippendale ; Sir Oliver Surface, Mr. Addison ; Joseph Surface, Mr. Alfred Wigan ; Charles Surface, Mr. James Anderson ; Crabtree, Mr. Compton ; Sir Benjamin Backbite, Mr. Bancroft ; Moses, Mr. J. Clarke ; Careless, Mr. Montague ; Trip, Mr. H. J. Byron ; Snake, Mr. T. Stuart ; Lady Teazle, Miss Amy Sedgwick ; Mrs. Candour, Mrs. Chippendale ; Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Alfred Mellon ; Maria, Miss Edith Stuart.

Although I (S. B. B.) always detested scratch performances, I consented to play Sir Benjamin Backbite, having, as I thought, some ideas of the character as a 'macaroni' of the period which might,

perhaps, attract attention, from their novelty, to the exponent of the part. Impressed with this notion, I went to the *one* rehearsal which the play received in its entirety ; but the first suggestion I ventured to make, which was opposed to the old conventional business, paralyzed anything like progress ; there was nothing for it but to repent of having agreed to appear, and to reserve my notions for awhile (some of them were found to be of value by Mr. Lin Rayne when he played the part in our production of the *School for Scandal* later on, a view of the character which has been adopted on many subsequent revivals of the play). I may add that at this performance I shared a dressing-room with Compton, whose companionship, though brief, was delightful.

Following hard upon the great delight he had so recently given to the London actors—the date being June 9th—'the gaiety of nations was eclipsed' by the death of Dickens. Even at this lapse of time we easily recall the shock of it, which shook the land almost as if a death had happened in each household. In reply to a recommendation for some remedy for neuralgia, from which it may be remembered he sadly suffered at the time, and but a few short days before his fatal seizure, this letter came to us :

'Gad's Hill Place, Higham by Rochester, Kent,
'*Thursday, May* 31, 1870.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'I am most heartily obliged to you for your kind note, which I received here only last night, having come here from town circuitously to get a little change of air on the road. My sense of your interest cannot be better proved than by my trying the remedy you recommend, and that I will do immediately. As I shall be in town on Thursday, my troubling you to order it would be quite unjustifiable.

'I will use your name in applying for it, and will report the result after a fair trial. Whether this remedy succeeds or fails as to the neuralgia, I shall always consider myself under an obligation to it, for having indirectly procured me the great pleasure of receiving a communication from you ; for I hope I may lay claim to being one of the most earnest and delighted of your many artistic admirers.—Believe me, faithfully yours, CHARLES DICKENS.'

Not the least of the many debts the nation owes Charles Dickens is the abolition of the dreadful paraphernalia formerly attached to our funerals. Those terrible cloaks, scarves, and enormous hatbands, or 'weepers,' which once so commonly formed part of 'the trappings and the suits of woe,' have, owing mainly to the great master's pen, been swept away, together with the dreadful 'mutes' who used to stand as sentinels outside the house of mourning. The mere mention of them recalls a story of a funeral which took place from the home of a notably mean man on a bitterly cold day. So

keen was the east wind, so sharp the frost, that the chief undertaker, out of pity for the two unfortunates who were fulfilling under such hard conditions the position of mutes, asked the master of the house if he might send the men some brandy. 'Brandy for the mutes! Nothing of the sort. Never heard of such a thing! If they're cold, let 'em *jump about!*' This, surely, must have been the same person whose character was once thus described by an acquaintance who wished to convey a full idea of his parsimony: 'Mean, is he? Why, when his poor wife died he buried her from the Stores!'

Held down, as it were, by long runs, and 'obstructed,' so to speak, by our antipathy to benefits, Mr. Hare asked our permission, which was at once accorded, to give a special *matinée* at the Princess's Theatre. The programme selected was the farce of the *Bengal Tiger*, in which Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan acted, and Boucicault's comedy, *London Assurance*. The esteem in which the young actor was held will, perhaps, best be proved by simply recording the cast of the favourite old play: Sir Harcourt Courtly, Mr. Hare; Charles Courtly, Mr. H. J. Montague; Max Harkaway, Mr. Addison; Dazzle, Mr. Bancroft; Dolly Spanker, Mr. Buckstone; Mark Meddle, Mr. J. L. Toole; Cool, Mr. John Clayton; Solomon Isaacs, Mr. C. Collette; Lady Gay Spanker, Mrs. Bancroft; Grace Harkaway, Miss Carlotta Addison; Pert, Miss E. Farren.

Another attraction was that Arthur Sullivan and Frederic Clay played the piano between the acts. Although *M. P.* still continued its successful career, we could not rob ourselves of our holiday, which had been so restricted in the previous year, and on August 12th we brought the season, the prosperity of which had known no check, to a close, and went away to Scarborough. There a happy month was spent at the Grand Hotel, where we added to our list of friends that strange and interesting creature, the late Henry Fothergill Chorley: a man who neither loved nor hated by halves, but of whose nature we fortunately only knew the tender side. We grew to know him well, which meant to like him very much. We afterwards found out that he first felt an interest in us through having accidentally overheard the terms of affection in which we chanced to speak of Dickens; Chorley's love for the great writer being well known, and his grief at his recent death profound.

When that sad event occurred, he referred to it in these pathetic terms: 'I have a letter from poor Mary. If universal sympathy of the warmest kind in every form could soften the agony of such a trial, they will have it in overflowing measure; but it will not give back one of the noblest and most gifted men I have ever known, whose regard for me was one of those honours which make amends for much failure and disappointment. I cannot express to any human being the void this will make for me to my dying day.' As his friends thus fell from him Chorley would say, with a sigh, 'Ah me! there goes another page from my book: shall I have courage to try and replace it by a new leaf?'

Mr. Chorley was one of the strangest mixtures of hate and affection I ever met. I told him so once, and he replied, 'They *don't* mix; they are separate always. There is, with me, no half-way house. I could not bear to be indifferent; it is too colourless and flat, too uninteresting. I must like very much or not at all.'

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

There was a lady in the hotel who seemed to spend her time in the amiable occupation of picking everybody else's character to pieces; she had a terrible effect on Mr. Chorley. When he saw her approach, he would take a long circuitous route to avoid meeting her, and although she was very handsome, he would never allow it, saying, 'With an ugly tongue no woman can be handsome.' He was a remarkable-looking man: a spare figure, a reddish face, with small blue, searching, twinkling eyes; his voice was thin, and he spoke in a petulant, incisive tone, with a keep-away-from-me action of the hand. He latterly wore a black velvet skull-cap with a coloured tassel, and a necktie of a brilliant hue. I was fortunate in being admitted into his friendship, and, strange to say, could speak frankly to him at any time, no matter what his mood. I obtained his goodwill in an unusual way; but then he was an unusual man. He asked me one evening, soon after we first met, if I would recite a poem of his at some entertainment that was to be given, and I replied that I was there for a holiday; and, as my work had been very heavy all the season, I felt that I must not deprive myself of one hour of my rest. Learning a recitation meant at least three or four days' drudgery, so I gave a decisive *No*. On the following day he asked us to sit next to him at dinner, and he became every day more and more friendly. I said to him one evening, laughingly, 'How is it that you seem to like me when I so firmly declined to recite your poem?' He replied in his thin, shrill voice, but with a pleasant, twinkling smile, 'I liked your impudence.' He then added more seriously, 'You had courage to speak as you felt; I like courage. You are not afraid of me, so I like *you*.' He would resent a joke at his expense from anyone he disliked in a sharp and bitter manner; but, as he said, preferred a brick from one he liked to a handsome present from one he *dis*liked. He railed violently at the German bands and organ-grinders, who persistently played near his window 'Champagne Charley is my Name,' a popular comic song at that time, saying he should like to burn all music-halls. One evening he invited me to share his pint-bottle of champagne, saying, 'I always drink champagne, as you see; I prefer it to any other wine.' I instantly replied, 'Champagne Chorley.' He laughed a good deal, and said, 'I hate puns, but that is too good.' I am convinced that no one else would have dared to perpetrate such a joke at his expense.

This was the period of the Franco-German War, when the telegram-board in the hall of the hotel was besieged, as day by day

disaster following disaster for the French was chronicled, culminating in their humiliation at Sedan. Indeed, the sounds of a tottering old newsvendor's piping voice still ring in one's ears, as he paraded the streets, with his monotonous, reiterated cry, 'The *Yorkshire Post!* the *Leeds Mercury!* containin' the last words of the poor old Emperor afore he resigned hisself into the hands of the Proosians!'

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEASON OF 1870-71.

Withdrawal of *M.P.*—Robertson's last appearance at rehearsal—Revival of *Ours*—Robertson's opinion of the acting—Letter from Boucicault—Offer of increased fees to Robertson—His reply—Mrs. Bancroft's dream about Robertson—His death—Some peculiarities of his stage life—His funeral—Notes by Mrs. Bancroft—Great success of *Ours*—Letter from Mr. Ruskin—*Cut off with a Shilling*—Lord Chief Justice Cockburn—Chorley: his dinners and his guests—The *Théâtre Français* company at the Opera Comique—Banquet at the Crystal Palace—Wilkie Collins's drama, *Man and Wife*—Letter from the author—Vacation at Scarborough: pleasant days there—Walter Montgomery's death.

BREAKING the run of a successful play is always dangerous, and, although in our case the risk had previously escaped bad results, on this occasion, when the theatre was reopened in the autumn, we found that the great attraction of *M.P.* had waned considerably, and from the hundredth night until its withdrawal, some sixty more, it attracted only moderate audiences.

We began to find ourselves somewhat in a fix to decide upon its successor, there being no chance, we felt and feared, of a new play by Robertson; although, poor fellow, being, or appearing to be, ignorant of the gravity of his illness, and ever hopefully looking forward to his recovery, he was misled at this time by some apparent return to health. He had made many notes for a play we had often talked about, the story of which bore some resemblance to the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and its title was to have been *Faith*. As it was, he even expended such little strength as had come back to him in dictating a comedy destined for the St. James's Theatre, then under the management of Mrs. John Wood. We solved the difficulty by deciding upon a revival of *Ours*, although it was but little more than four years since the play had been produced.

Great pains were bestowed upon the rehearsals, and the play was placed on the stage and dressed, especially with regard to the exactitude of the uniforms, in a more elaborate way than when first acted. Our neighbour, Admiral Inglefield, gave us a valuable bit of realism in a Russian drum captured by himself in the Crimea, and which has figured in all our subsequent performances of the

play. Apropos of this cheery friend, we often talked together in mock nautical language 'over the garden wall.' Brimful of good-humour, he would cry out, 'What cheer? Where bound?' to be answered by, 'What time do you splice the main brace?' or 'You were late home last night. We saw you douse the glims!' Lady Inglefield often laughed at our salt-sea chatter. But to return to *Ours;* one day, while a full-band rehearsal of the second act, where the troops are supposed to be leaving for the Crimea, was in progress and the complete effect given to the scene, we were interrupted by the grief of a poor old servant of the theatre, who was engaged as a 'cleaner,' and at the time was following her daily occupation of brushing and dusting the stall-seats, when she burst into a flood of tears at the remembrance of a sad loss she had sustained by the death of a son at the battle of the Alma.

On one Saturday morning in November—a typical London day—when a cold white fog had penetrated into the theatre, while we were going through the first act, the hall-keeper came to us with a frightened look upon his face, and announced that Mr. Robertson was at the stage-door; we were terror-stricken, knowing him to be in an unfit state to leave his house, even in fine weather. He further sent a message that he dreaded the stairs which led to the stage—there were only four up, and, I think, six down, poor fellow!—and that he would like to drive round to the door then used as the royal entrance, and, if it might be opened, get to us that way. Of course all this was done at once, and, in a piteous plight, Robertson came for the last time among us; many of the company then spoke their last word to him, although it proved not to be his actual final visit to the little theatre he loved so much and always called 'his home.' He stayed for half an hour in dreadful suffering, and tortured by a cough which told what he endured. In an agony of pain caused by a violent paroxysm, he stooped down and knocked with a hollow sound upon the stage, saying in a voice made terribly painful by its tone of sad reproach, to imaginary phantoms, 'Oh, don't be in such a hurry!' We shuddered at the words, and, when he recovered, with difficulty persuaded him to return home; for he persisted in the thought that the mere sight of the familiar stage would of itself do him good, and hoped yet to come again. The little band that formed our company then grouped together (there was no more work that day), and the talk was only of the visit which none then present will have forgotten.

On Saturday, November 26th, *Ours* was revived with the following cast of characters: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Hare; Colonel Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Addison; Captain Samprey, Mr. W. Herbert; Angus Macalister, Mr. Coghlan; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. Charles Collette; Lady Shendryn, Miss Le Thiere; Blanche Haye, Miss Fanny Josephs; Mary Netley, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft).

It may be interesting to note here that this play, like *Masks and*

Faces, was suggested by a picture ; Robertson having evolved the plot from thoughts inspired by Millais's magnificent painting, 'The Black Brunswicker.'

Poor Tom insisted upon being present against all advice, and occupied the box which had long been known to us as his. This proved to be the last time he ever entered a theatre. On the following day he wrote this letter :

'6, Eton Road, N.W., *November* 27, 1870.

'My dear Marie,—*Ours* was acted so excellently last night that, as I may not see you for the next few days, I write to express the great gratification it gave me to see that the "light troupe" had distinguished themselves more than ever.

'You know that I am not given to flattery, and that my standard of taste for comedy is somewhat high. I was really *charmed*, and I was very ill the whole night, in discomfort and annoyance. The remark of everyone I heard was, "What wonderfully good acting !" and I was pleased to find Boucicault descanting on it to a chosen few. He said that not only was the general acting of the piece equally admirable, but that he had never—including Paris—seen such refinement and effect combined, as in the performance of the second act. He said, too, that the actors who had played in the piece before acted better than ever. I mention this, because the same thing struck me. Bancroft was most excellent, and I have never seen him succeed in sinking his own identity so much as in the last act. For the first time in my life I felt grateful to the folks on the stage-side of the footlights, and I am not given to that sort of gratitude.

'It was terribly late last night. If the revival should draw, and it should be worth while, could not the first and third acts be relieved of some ten minutes' talk ? Cut wherever you like. *I* shan't wince, for I don't care about either the first or last acts. If they had been less perfectly acted they would have missed fire, and deservedly.—Yours very sincerely, T. W. Robertson.'

No letter in our collection is more valued by us than this one, which was followed by corroboration from another critical pen :

'326, Regent Street, W., *November* 27, 1870.

'My dear Bancroft,—Accept my warmest congratulations on the very great improvement in the present performance of *Ours* over the original cast, especially in the part of Chalcot.

'The tone of the whole is elevated, and I entertain no doubt that the play will have a second run. I agree with the remark of the *Observer* of this morning that the dialogue and business of acts one and three might be accelerated.

'I do not think that they dragged, as it says, but the peculiar dislocation which Tom's dialogue encourages inclines an actor to slowdom of delivery.

'Excellent when the laughter intervenes, but not so when the dialogue is not so sparkling as to admit of it. I know you will excuse my criticism, and credit me with the sincere interest which induces me to give an opinion.

'Mrs. Bancroft was herself throughout admirable. Give her my love. She looked good enough to eat, every bit. Her dresses were exquisite. Why do they call the "Roly-poly" farce? It is eminently natural.—Yours very sincerely, DION BOUCICAULT.'

The revival proved an immense success, a success indeed far eclipsing that of its original production. Very shortly after, it being manifest that the play would enjoy a long career, we decided to offer Robertson an increase on the fees we had paid during the original run. To a letter wishing him to agree to this, his reply is appended:

'Wednesday Morning, *December* 7, 1870.

'DEAR B.,—I need not tell you that the death of Fred Younge * has so knocked me over that you must excuse all errors of brusquerie, omission, and commission in this answer to your friendly letter.

'Useless to say I am glad to hear *Ours* goes so well and is so successful. May it continue!

'All trouble with my piece at the St. James's is over, and I was "reading up" to write the new play for the Prince of Wales's, which I shall get on to at once.

'Don't be offended that I return your cheque. I recognise your kindness and intention to the full; but having thought the matter over, I cannot reconcile it to my sense of justice and probity to take more than I bargained for. An arrangement is an arrangement, and cannot be played fast and loose with. If a man—say an author—goes in for a certain sum, he must be content with it, and "seek no new;" if he goes in for a share, he must take good and bad luck too. So please let *Ours* be paid for at the sum originally agreed on. With kind love to Marie, and many thanks—I am, yours always, T. W. ROBERTSON.'

The winter was one of unusual severity, and soon afterwards Robertson was sent to Torquay for a few weeks; the weather was equally wretched there, and the journey, added to the mortification of the failure of the last play he ever wrote, called *War*, and which was withdrawn from the St. James's programme after a very few performances, seemed to hasten his end. For a little while he was rarely able to see his closest friends, among whom at the time were Dion Boucicault, Tom Hood, John Hare, and ourselves.

* On the previous day, Frederick Younge, the original George D'Alroy, and a very old friend, and once schoolfellow, of Robertson's, who had for some time been the manager of the company engaged to play the Robertson comedies in the provinces, was killed in a railway accident in the North of England.

On Wednesday, the 1st of February, we were fortunate enough to call upon him at a good moment, and he begged to see us. We found him propped up in a big chair, breathing with difficulty. He talked for some little time, dwelling, among other subjects, on the new play he had conceived for us, adding that only earlier in the day he had jotted down some more notes about it. All this we knew could not be, and when we went away we both felt we should never touch his hand again. [During Tom Robertson's absence at Frankfort, when he left England to be married, I (M. E. B.) had a strange dream about him which I related to a mutual friend, who imprudently repeated it to Tom some time afterwards. My dream was this: I saw them being married, and when he was placing the ring upon his bride's finger, I could see that it was lined with black; then I thought, when he left the church, two children came up to Mrs. Robertson with wreaths of *immortelles* in their hands. I quite forgot all about this dream as time went on; but poor Tom, it seemed, did not. On this day when we were leaving him, and we saw too plainly that the sad end was near, he drew me towards him, and said quietly, 'Do you remember your dream about me, Marie? The ring is getting black, and the wreaths of *immortelles* are made.'] On the night of the Friday following, when the play was over, Dion Boucicault was waiting privately at the theatre to gently break the news to us that quietly and suddenly the end had come that evening.

Never were the oft-quoted words, 'What shadows we are! what shadows we pursue!' more fully realized.

After an early manhood passed in struggling misery, and sometimes almost want, Robertson was snatched from life when he had only just begun to taste its sweets. His footprints, as it were, upon the shore of fame were quickly placed, but he trod deep enough for even the sands of Time not readily to efface them.

Shortly after this, his two children (by his first marriage) spent the day with us; and as we were walking round the garden, 'Tommy,' who was but a small boy then, seemed to love to dwell upon the sad subject of his father's death, and the little fellow was very pathetic in his boyish remarks. All at once he said, 'A few days before father died, I knew he was going to leave us.' 'How could you know it?' we asked. 'Because he looked so handsome. I have heard that people get such a beautiful look upon their faces when they are going to die.' It seemed as if the son had inherited his father's poetic mind.

Tom Robertson was fond of comparing our conduct with that of other managers towards him in his early days, and would often linger long after the rehearsals were over, giving us painful accounts of his many struggles in life, when, at times, he would express himself with much bitterness. We became the best of friends; our opinions on the art of acting perfectly coincided with his, and the result was, to quote the words of others, 'A new era in dramatic

history.' He would constantly speak of our little theatre with gratitude, and called it, as we have already said, his home. There is no doubt that when he wrote for us, his whole heart was in his work, for his best plays were written for that theatre where he never knew failure. As we perfectly understood one another, there was not a single contretemps between us, during a friendship which was broken only by his death. Although his own style was utterly of another kind, Robertson was a great admirer of Sardou, and we recall distinctly his enthusiasm on a return from Paris after seeing *Patrie*, and a like appreciation, at another time, of Meilhac and Halévy's *Frou Frou*. In these plays we have always believed, and but for somewhat Quixotic feelings at the date of their production, as to acting, as long as possible, only English plays, should have ventured on versions of one or both of them.

Some peculiarities, referring especially to his stage life, of so successful and distinguished a writer as Robertson proved to be, may be worth recording. He always sat in the same box on all first nights of his comedies at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and during their progress rarely looked at the stage, but watched the audience, glancing continually and rapidly from one part of the theatre to another, to gather the different effects the same point or speech might produce on various people, being of course familiar from rehearsal with the actors' treatment; while, between the acts, he would often push his way into parts of the theatre where he would not be recognised, and listen to all the opinions he could overhear. He also made a point of having someone—entirely removed from theatrical life—in each part of the theatre, whom he would see on the following day and hold long conversations with, carefully comparing the impression and the remarks he drew from these different witnesses, generally, he said, with valuable results.

On the night of the funeral we determined to close the theatre; we knew no better way to show our estimate of the loss we sustained. Upon this act the *Times* commented as follows:

'Last night the Prince of Wales's Theatre remained closed as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Mr. T. W. Robertson, whose funeral was appointed for yesterday. We cannot recall to mind any precedent in this capital for so singular a compliment to a dramatic author; but perhaps there never was an instance of a dramatist, who was not likewise an actor, being so intimately associated with the fortunes of a particular theatre, as Mr. Robertson was with the stage and company governed by Mrs. Bancroft.'

The extract from an account of the ceremony we also feel to be better than any words of ours:

'No better evidence of the high esteem in which the distinguished dramatist, T. W. Robertson, was held, could have been

possibly afforded than by the great gathering of his friends assembled yesterday to pay the last sad tribute of personal respect; never, probably, had the peaceful cemetery of Abney Park, Stoke Newington, included within its boundary such a crowd of living personages, whose names were all more or less familiar to the public. The majority of them recalled very different associations from those connected with the sad thoughts now aroused; but it was impossible to mistake the sincerity of expression to be traced in every face. Here was no simulated woe. The heart was full, and the faltering voice and the trickling tear had nothing to do with the artifices of the stage. The many actors and actresses who gathered round the few feet of earth henceforth to be marked as the burial-place of one with whose creations they had been so conspicuously identified needed no prompter to give a cue to the utterance of emotion. Each had a vivid remembrance of some gentle pressure of the hand—some friendly encouragement in a kindly voice spoken—of some generous written acknowledgment of services rendered. All had enduring recollections of the warm heart and the active brain ever ministering to the social happiness and the intellectual pleasure of those around him; and the oppressive sense of the heavy loss sustained in the sudden stilling of the impulses of both was perhaps most acutely felt by the members of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, with whom the deceased dramatist had been so intimately associated. As a mark of respect—more worthy of note because it is entirely without precedent—Mrs. Bancroft had announced that the theatre would be closed on the evening of the funeral; and throughout the company, all present, from the directress to the humblest official, there was a feeling of personal bereavement manifested in the strongest manner. Mrs. Bancroft was deeply affected, and it was evidently with the greatest difficulty that her emotions could be kept under control.'

At this moment, perchance, the lines of Longfellow came into the minds of many, with the consolatory reflection:

> 'Our life of mortal breath
> Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
> Whose portal we call Death.'

The plate on the coffin bore the following inscription: 'Thomas William Robertson, born 9th January, 1829; died 3rd February, 1871.'

No one, perhaps, had fewer enemies or more friends than Tom Robertson. He had borne much adversity apparently light-heartedly, and in his prosperity he lost no old friends, while gaining many new ones.

NOTES ON ROBERTSON BY M. E. B.

Tom Robertson was one of the most sensitive of men, and at the same time terribly sarcastic. I fancy his early troubles soured his nature, and often for the moment blunted his best impulses. Many a time have I walked up and down the stage with him, after a rehearsal was over, listening

to stories of his past life. He loved to dwell upon the recollection of them to a sympathetic listener, and would relate his wretched experiences with such bitterness that it often made me feel sorry that he would not take a less jaundiced view of the world, which he said he should like to have 'as a ball at his feet, that he might kick it.'

He was very unforgiving and relentless in his condemnation when he thought he had been slighted or wronged, although he was tender-hearted and very charitable, especially in feeding the hungry, ever ready to sympathize with those who were sick or in trouble of any sort. He would take a strange delight in saying the most biting, cutting things, to certain of his acquaintances, but would immediately resent any sarcasm if pointed to himself. I have known him writhe under adverse criticism, and fret over it until he became absolutely peevish. I shall never forget the terrible night of the production at the Adelphi of a drama written by him called *The Nightingale*. I was in delicate health at the time, and not acting: Mr. and Mrs. Robertson persuaded me to accompany them to the theatre, and we occupied a stage-box. During the performance Tom came in, and went out, in a restless and nervous state of excitement painful to witness. Not long after the play began, it was evident to me, and also to Mrs. Robertson, that its success was doubtful; but we dared not even hint our fears to Tom, who seemed to be in a sort of dream, expecting loud applause at certain moments, which, however, did not come, and the fact seemed to daze him; he appeared unable to realize that the play was in jeopardy, but the awful pallor of his face told us of his intense and anxious suffering. Failure was imminent, and ominous sounds were heard all over the theatre. Suddenly he would rush in and hurriedly ask, 'How do you think it is going?' with such a scared look that we feared to tell him. I dreaded the end of the play, for its fate was sealed, and wished from my heart that I had not yielded to their persuasions to accompany them. As the last act proceeded, and laughter came where he intended to produce sympathy, and various other signs of ridicule so well known to 'first nighters' were forced upon him, he grew ashy-pale and very silent. When the curtain finally fell, amidst a shower of groans and hisses, he quietly prepared to leave the theatre; but as he left the box, he shook his fist at the audience and muttered between his clenched teeth an imprecation which he did not intend either of us to hear. Oddly enough, although the piece was a deserved failure, Tom never would (at least to his friends) admit that it was not a good play; and he told me himself that he should never forgive the audience of that night. I indeed ought to say so, for I was seriously ill afterwards.

Robertson's personal appearance never seemed to enter much into his thoughts; I don't think the idea of being tidy or untidy occurred to him, for he was a Bohemian to the heart's core. I

never saw him act, but I think it is well known, and the admission was frankly made by himself, that he was not 'esteemed a good actor.' He and I never once during the whole of our acquaintance knew what it was to have an angry word. This will always be a happy reflection to me, and I mark the days when we first met with red letters; we were of mutual value to each other, and certainly our good stars were in the ascendant when Tom and I were 'first acquaint.' Dear Tom! there is no one who has a better right than I to place an evergreen upon your memory—for you will never cease to hold your place in my esteem and gratitude until I myself 'shake off this mortal coil.'

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

It was thought by many that Robertson's death would be a blow to the theatre and its management from which neither could possibly recover, and at the time many such expressions as 'that bubble has burst' reached our ears. We waited very quietly, convinced of the importance of our next step, and resolved, at least, that it should not be a timid one; for the great success of this performance of *Ours* prevented immediate anxiety, and foreshadowed that we had the same friend to fall back upon in *Caste*. Apropos of the fortunate career which followed the revival, a letter from so eminent a man as Mr. Ruskin was naturally delightful to receive:

'Denmark Hill, S.E., *March* 16, 1871.

'MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—I cannot refuse myself the indulgence of thanking you for the great pleasure we had at the play on Wednesday last. As regards myself, it is a duty no less than an indulgence to do so, for I get more help in my own work from a good play than from any other kind of thoughtful rest.

'It would not indeed have been of much use to see this one while Mrs. Bancroft could not take part in it; but much as I enjoy her acting and yours, I wish the piece, with its general popular interest, did not depend so entirely upon you two, and, when you two are resting, on the twins. I was disappointed with Mr. Hare's part; not with his doing of it, but with his having so little to do. However, that was partly my own mistake, for I had a fixed impression on my mind that he was to wear a lovely costume of blue and silver, with ostrich feathers, and, when he was refused, to order all the company to be knouted, and send the heroine to Siberia.

'In spite of his failure in not coming up to my expectations, will you please give him my kind regards? and believe me -Yours very gratefully, J. RUSKIN.'

At Easter we produced *Cut off with a Shilling*, an admirably written one-act play, by Theyre Smith, the author of those clever pieces, *A Happy Pair* and *Uncle's Will*. It was acted by Miss Carlotta Addison, Mr. Montgomery, and Mr. Collette, and played during this and the next season for more than three hundred times.

We allude here to pleasant dinners given by Henry Chorley, and to which we often went, because at the little house in Eaton Place West we first met many of the celebrities in both the social and the artistic world whom we afterwards knew well. The company was always oddly, but cleverly, assorted, and among the leading names of frequent guests since passed away was that of the late Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, with whom we enjoyed the privilege of close friendship until his death in 1880. He was a delightful companion, and when he had left his wig and robes in the Queen's Bench, and walked down Whitehall, as was his custom in all weathers, he looked far more like the captain of his own yacht, or a north-country farmer, than a 'wise and upright judge.'

Let us quote Chorley's own cheery words in bidding a guest to one of his dinners: 'I have a dinner here on Gunpowder-day, Sunday, November 5th, half-past seven. I have no choice save to take a Sunday, because I shall receive some of my theatrical friends —Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft and Mr. Hare—and they are free on no other day. If you are disposed to bid for a stall to meet the galaxy (is not that grand?), I will keep one for your disposal, and a bed for yourself and carpet-bag after.'

Owing to the reign of the Commune and the siege of Paris, the entire company of the *Théâtre Français* first came over to England in this year, and acted from May 1st until July 8th at the Opera Comique Theatre, in the Strand, but only with indifferent success until the last few nights of their engagement. At nearly all the *matinées* which were given on Saturdays we were present. At one of these morning performances, when we were accompanied by the Hares, I especially recall the exquisite acting of Favart and Delaunay in *La nuit d'Octobre*, which greatly impressed us all. For some time we would revert to that performance as being one of the most delicate and artistic we had ever witnessed on the stage. I have a very happy recollection of a particular evening we spent with Mr. and Mrs. Hare, who were living at that time a short distance only from our house; and it happened that when we or they were not engaged elsewhere on Sunday evenings, we often dined with them, or they with us. On those occasions, Mr. Hare and Mrs. Bancroft would often think of something in the shape of entertainment (as if they had not enough of it during the week) for the amusement of a tiny audience, which frequently consisted of Mrs. Hare and myself only. On one evening they gave an imitation of Favart and Delaunay, which was quite extraordinary; and we regretted that it was not seen and enjoyed by others, for we thought it more than a pity that it should have been lost. In these improvised entertainments, many things were done that would have been a great success with a large audience; but then, perhaps, as is often the case, preparation might have spoilt them. The troupe included then that charming actor, Bressant, who, perhaps, has never been replaced. He always seemed to have far more of that

valuable stage quality, *distinction*, called by their critics *autorité*, than is, as a rule, possessed by even the best French exponents of our art.

At the end of their stay, they were fêted at the Crystal Palace, where a big *déjeuner* was given in their honour, and attended by all our leading literary and artistic people of the day. I am reminded by Sir Frederick Pollock's recollections that I was so fortunate as to have himself and George Du Maurier for neighbours; the chair was taken by Lord Dufferin, who, with Lord Granville and Alfred Wigan, addressed our guests in their own language. The Frenchmen looked strange enough in the daylight, being all clad in evening dress, it having been forgotten to tell them that our customs for morning ceremonies so far differed from theirs.

As the summer advanced, we had, of course, it is needless to tell, bestowed many anxious thoughts upon the decision as to what should be our next performance. After wading through reams of rubbish, we heard, through Mr. Hare, that Wilkie Collins had written a drama on the subject of his successful novel *Man and Wife*. This we read, and at once agreed to produce it. A letter from the author, which we quote, ratifies the time we came to this decision:

'*August* 1, 1871.

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—Let me assure you that I feel the sincerest gratification that *Man and Wife* has been accepted at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. Every advantage that I could possibly wish for is, I know beforehand, already obtained for my work, now that it has secured the good fortune of addressing itself to the public with Mrs. Bancroft's introduction.—Believe me, very faithfully yours, WILKIE COLLINS.'

So commenced a friendship, which it has been our privilege to enjoy ever since, with one whose masterly romances had lightened many an hour and given us infinite delight; for deep is our debt of gratitude to the creator of Margaret Vanstone, Rachel Verrinder, and Count Fosco. Wilkie Collins might, perhaps, as a novelist, be compared with Sardou as a dramatist: the smallest brick in the structure is intentionally placed, and carries many others; if knocked out, or displaced, serious results would to a certainty ensue to the entire fabric.

We resolved to commence our next campaign with a revival of *Caste*, and to announce the new play by Mr. Collins as its successor. The theatre closed on August 19th, when *Ours* was acted for the two hundred and ninth time of its revival, the success of which had far exceeded in every way the original production.

Our vacation was again passed at Scarborough, where, among other friends, we had many a pleasant day with the Yates's and the Boucicaults; Sir George Armytage and J. M. Bellew; George Lewis, Clement Scott, and young George Greville—all of whom were holiday-making at the same time. Delightful picnic-drives to

Hackness and Forge Valley ; the early morning swim in the deep sea, when I taught 'Dot' Boucicault, then a plucky little boy of about twelve and clothed in a gray kilt, to take a header, were among the pleasures I look back to.

The only theatrical event to recall during this holiday was the wretched news that came by telegram of poor Walter Montgomery's miserable death : he having shot himself in Stafford Street, off Bond Street, two days after his marriage. A sad end to a life once full of promise, and to a career which might have made more stir in the world. I last saw him, a few weeks before, in the smoking-room of the Garrick Club, when we had a pleasant talk over the days gone by. At the time, although I thought his spirits seemed to have burnt out and found him changed, there was nothing to foreshadow a disordered mind.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEASON OF 1871-72.

Reproduction of *Caste*—Its renewed success—Illness of the Prince of Wales—Thanksgiving Day—Mrs. Bancroft's verses on 'The Queen's Seclusion'—Death of Chorley—Managerial and Personal Notes by Mr. Bancroft—Proposed visit to the United States—Lord Lytton's *Money*—Letter from the author—The *Athenæum* on the company—Lord Lytton's thanks—Increase of fame and friends—Last Provincial Tour—Manchester—Liverpool—Hare as a 'caged lion'—Edmund Yates's departure for America—A bachelor holiday—First impressions in Germany and Switzerland—A letter from Lord Chief Justice Cockburn—A riverside episode.

ALTHOUGH the great success which had followed the revival of *Ours* made us hopeful that *Caste* would also prove a trump-card, we did not expect the enthusiasm its reproduction met with when we reopened our theatre in September. Five of the seven characters were still in the hands of their original representatives, as old Eccles's two daughters were played as before, Lydia Foote being re-engaged for Esther, and George Honey again joined the company to resume his performance of the bibulous parent ; Sam Gerridge and Captain Hawtree also were there to misunderstand and afterwards admire each other's nature ; Mr. Coghlan was this time the young love-sick dragoon; and Mrs. Leigh Murray his austere old mother.

Night after night was the theatre crowded, and the comedy received with a delight even warmer than before. In this happy condition we leave the theatre for the moment to briefly speak of other things, thinking it a fragment of its little history to note, by the way, that a fresh arrangement then commenced with Mr. James,

who from this date drew a fixed weekly sum for his services 'before the curtain,' without participating in the profits.

It was in the early winter of this year that the serious illness of the Prince of Wales from typhoid fever occurred, when the national excitement reached so high a pitch, and the craving for the last news of his condition grew so great, that the bulletins from Sandringham were even read out to the audiences between the acts, or posted up in the lobbies of the theatres for quite ten successive evenings. The National Anthem, and the air, 'God bless the Prince of Wales,' were nightly played by all the orchestras. From about December 7th until the 14th, it will be remembered, the Prince was hardly expected to survive from hour to hour, but from that date more reassuring bulletins were issued, and the relief they caused after the pent-up emotions of all communities is fresh in every English memory. The extraordinary manifestations of loyalty to the throne and personal attachment to his Royal Highness which this illness seemed to set ablaze culminated on the day of General Thanksgiving, when all London was *en fête*, and the Queen went to the service held at St. Paul's. We were fortunate enough to receive tickets from the Lord Chamberlain (who on all great public occasions has for years remembered the theatrical profession, which comes so directly under his control) for the Cathedral, and are not likely to forget the imposing ceremony, nor the aspect of the building with its splendid *coup d'œil*, greatly aided by the uniforms and decorations of every kind, whose wearers formed so large a part of the vast assemblage.

This mention of Her Majesty's name, and the enthusiasm which greeted her appearance by the side of her convalescent son, reminds me of some lines written by Mrs. Bancroft, on 'The Queen's Seclusion,' a few years after the Prince Consort's death, and I accept the responsibility of dragging the verses from their modest retirement in a little book devoted to such fragments:

'Reproach her not! Let no harsh tongue
With cruel counsel seek
To dash the tear from anguish wrung
That lingers on her cheek.

'Reproach her not! Why lift the veil
Of sorrow from her brow?
Why crush love's blossoms as they pale
In grief's cold shadow now?

'Reproach her not, that still she weeps
In sad seclusion's gloom,
Still droops for him who darkly sleeps
Death's slumber in the tomb.

'Reproach her not! Nor idly deem
The glory of a crown
Should wake her soul from that sweet dream
Of joy for ever flown.

'Reproach her not! But in each breast,
Be this a people's prayer:
God's grace upon the mourner rest
And hallow her despair.'

We note for a moment a dance and supper we gave on a Wednesday in February (1872), because Henry Chorley was among the guests; we had sent our old friend a card without the faintest notion of the invitation being accepted, thinking him too ailing and infirm to care for late parties. However, when the night arrived he was announced, greatly to our surprise, in a very cheery mood, and appeared to be in more than his usual health, which for a long time had not been robust. He seemed to thoroughly enjoy his evening, for he stayed through a late supper, and did not leave until the early hours of the Thursday morning. On the following day (Friday), we were greatly shocked to see an announcement of his death placarded in the streets, as the early editions of the evening papers appeared. We drove at once to Eaton Place, and learnt that he had been found in the morning by his servant in a state of syncope from which he never rallied. Throughout the previous day, and until he went to bed at night, he had been apparently quite well, expecting, indeed, a few of his many friends to dinner on the fatal day. Our last look at him proved that Chorley's love for Dickens was manifested until the end of his life, for by his wish two branches from the fine cedar-trees which grew on the lawn at Gad's Hill were placed on either side of his coffin and buried with him. The King of Terrors robbed us of a valued friend, and the souvenirs so kindly sent us by Mr. Benson Rathbone, his executor, remind us often of the pleasant evenings their former owner gave us.

To return to the little house in Tottenham Street—which, at the time, was chiefly transformed nightly into 'The Little House in Stangate'—we were on the eve of a crisis in its career, for successful as the revival of *Caste* had proved, when we neared Easter we began to think it would be wise to withdraw the play while it still had life, and not attempt to force it through the season.

MANAGERIAL AND PERSONAL: S. B. B.

I may here take occasion to remark upon what, in my own estimate of my judgment in management, I have always thought the most valuable quality—*courage*. I mean chiefly with respect to the strength of will necessary to withdraw a play while it was still very remunerative, not only from belief in the attractive powers of its successor, but also that some attraction might be spared to it to allow of its standing one in good stead by increasing the *répertoire* of the theatre, either for revival when ripe enough to be played again, or for use as a stop-gap in the event of disaster, in the shape of a failure, and so to stem the tide of ill-fortune which must have its share in the most favoured theatrical enterprise—a venture which partakes

greatly of the character of gambling. For my own part, I found its powers so strong in this respect as to rob me of all desire for that form of excitement in any other way, and although I have seen every Derby run since 'Gladiateur' won the Blue Riband in 1865, I never cared to bet. While on this subject I may add that I have heard, and laughed at, rumours (as remote from the truth as many others that have reached me about me and mine) of the large sums I have realized by fortunate dealings on the Stock Exchange, the truth being that the only gambling speculation I ever made proved a conspicuous failure; while I have but a feeble definition to offer of the meaning of 'bulling' or 'bearing,' and the word 'Contango' is as foreign to me as the language of Arabia.

Walls, they say, have ears; were trees endowed with lips, those in our garden and its little orchard in the Grove End Road could reveal many an anxious walk and talk between us two, about the theatre's future, which was, at that time especially, a question full of anxious thought and care.

A very flattering and tempting offer had reached us to take our entire company, and act the Robertson comedies through the United States. As this would have been the first series of complete English performances given in America, I think it may be inferred, remembering the reputation of our management at the time, that success was a foregone conclusion, while the chances in favour of the engagement being exceptionally brilliant were very great. A scheme of this magnitude, of course, required to be dealt with a long time in advance, and I think it was in the early spring that I persuaded Mrs. Bancroft to try and overcome her terror of the sea, and consent that we should entertain the extremely liberal proposition that had been made to us.

With the view of seeing if the arrangement could be entered into for the autumn of the following year, I commenced negotiations, and settled with Mr. English, the dramatic agent of Garrick Street, and formerly Sothern's business manager, to go with us to America in that capacity should the matter be decided. One day, after many details had been arranged and certain salaries fixed, I was in his private office busily engaged in settling further questions, when our conversation was interrupted by the whistle of the speaking-tube which communicated with the room of his partner, Mr. Blackmore. English applied the pipe to his ear, and received this information through it: 'Knowing all about the matter you are discussing with Mr. Bancroft, I interrupt you to say that Craven Robertson is now with me, anxious to arrange a visit to America with *Caste*, and the other plays, as soon as possible.' Needless to say that this message fell like a bombshell into an enemy's camp, and suspended our proceedings. Mr. Craven Robertson was the brother of the author, and then had the control of the comedies.

Our proposed visit to the States being interfered with in the way I have told, we eventually determined, after long and well-weighed

consideration, that the first successor to the Robertson comedies should be a production of Lord Lytton's *Money;* being helped to our decision by the remembrance that if we met with failure, we should still have *Man and Wife*, with the advantage of its being a new play, to fall back upon. We explained our views to Wilkie Collins, who at once, and in the kindest way, acquiesced in them.

A further step towards success was taken, Mrs. Bancroft being contented then to play the small part of Georgina Vesey, while I resigned Captain Dudley Smooth—but not without a pang, I confess, for it had been a favourite part of mine in the country—and undertook the not slight task of trying to invent still another type of 'Dandy,' and bestow whatever might result from the effort on the character of Sir Frederick Blount.

While dilating on so unworthy a subject as myself, I may as well make a clean breast of matters, and say that much of my professional conduct has been guided—however faintly I may at times have laid their text to heart, and however frequently I may have failed to profit by them—by some words I once read which were applied to a distinguished actor of the last century: 'By his impartial management of the stage and the affability of his temper he merited the respect and esteem of all within the theatre and the applause of those without.'

No one knows my backslidings so well as I do—no one regrets them with the same keenness; but if, since the days when, as a very young man, I first bore the weight and responsibility of ruling others, I have in the main obeyed my maxim, it is all that can be asked of poor humanity; for the occasions when I have failed to follow it, I hope I have been forgiven.

Let me add that Mrs. Bancroft from the beginning placed perfect confidence in my judgment, not only with regard to the business side of our work, but in the choice of plays, and accepted my opinion in nearly all important matters, even when, unfortunately, it chanced to be at variance with her own. Whenever I was at fault, the least I have to say is that she stood more firmly than ever by my side, and never allowed her faith in me to be shaken by an occasional mistake. Indeed, I can most truly add that throughout our managerial career she was in all matters my strongest help, ever modest in success, ever full of courage to meet a reverse, and ever faithful in sorrow or in joy. She also shared the belief with me that considerations as to what parts we should play ourselves were never to bias our judgment in the refusal or acceptance of plays. In this spirit Mrs. Bancroft cheerfully sank her own importance as an actress on many occasions, and frequently to some detriment, through long runs, of her position before the public; playing, for instance, Georgina Vesey in *Money*, and subsequently Blanche Lundie in *Man and Wife;* Pert in *London Assurance;* Lady Henry Fairfax in *Diplomacy;* Lady Walker in *Odette;* Olga in *Fedora;* and Miss Maplebeck in *Lords and Commons*—being content, for

the good of the theatre and its management, to engage in her own company, often cheerfully playing second parts to them, Madame Modjeska, Miss Ellen Terry, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Bernard-Beere, and Mrs. Kendal.

It seems to me that this simple record best speaks the utter absence from her nature of such a feeling as professional jealousy. The value of such self-abnegation I cannot over-estimate, as without it we should never have produced some of our most successful plays.

In this book, to which she contributes so important a share, Mrs. Bancroft would not, I think, like me to say more, but it is a subject on which it would be impossible for me to say less.

Many head-shakings and ominous forebodings followed the bold announcement of our intended performance of Lord Lytton's comedy, *Money;* some of our best friends thought the step a mad one, and that certain failure awaited the temerity of our attack upon what had grown to be known as a 'standard work.' We may perhaps add that, apart from its original production by Macready (who described the part of Evelyn as a bad one), the comedy was called unlucky, and one that had persistently belied its name.

We decided how we would cast the play, and went to work upon it for six or seven weeks, with the conviction always facing us that we were playing for the highest stake we had risked up to that time, but buoyed up with the feeling that success would break our trammels by allowing our choice of plays a much wider range in the future.

In the course of our rehearsals we applied to the author to be allowed to make a few alterations in his play, chiefly with a view to avoiding a change of scene, and received the following response :

'DEAR SIR,—I am obliged for your courteous letter, and have no wish to make frivolous objections to your performance of my comedy. If it suits your convenience to play Act IV. without change of scene between one room and another in Evelyn's house, so be it ; only let me first see how you would modify lines.

'It is not a few verbal cuts here and there on which I should think it worth while to cavil with a management so accomplished and so skilled as yours.—Yours truly, LYTTON.'

Justified by the courteous sympathy received from Lord Lytton during interviews on the general treatment of his work, we rehearsed with renewed vigour, bestowing the greatest pains upon the most elaborate interiors of rooms we had as yet shown, and an exact reproduction of a card-room in a West-End club, the members of which were represented by young fellows who wished to go upon the stage : some of whom, we are delighted to add, have since made their mark as actors.

So as to give the production the chance of being acted during the height of the London season, we withdrew *Caste* after adding two hundred to its number of representations; and Lord Lytton, greatly to our satisfaction, expressed his wish to be present at our first performance of his work, which took place on Saturday, May 4, 1872.

We printed the following old saying on the play-bill:

'Tis a very good world we live in,
To lend, or to spend, or to give in;
But to beg, or to borrow, or get a man's own,
'Tis the very worst world that ever was known.'

The characters in *Money* were cast as follows: Lord Glossmore, Mr. C. Collette; Sir John Vesey, Bart., Mr. Hare; Sir Frederick Blount, Bart., Mr. Bancroft; Captain Dudley Smooth, Mr. Archer (his first appearance in London); Mr. Graves, Mr. George Honey; Mr. Stout, Mr. F. Dewar; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. Coghlan; Mr. Sharp, Mr. E. Dyas; An Old Member of the Club, Mr. F. Glover; Frantz, Mr. Herbert; Tabouret, Mr. Campbell; Mac Finch, Mr. Denison; Crimson, Mr. Elwood; Patent, Mr. Robinson; Toke, Mr. Franks; Lady Franklin, Mrs. Leigh Murray; Georgina Vesey, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft); Clara Douglas, Miss Fanny Brough.

The actor who gained most by this production was certainly Mr. Coghlan, whose fine performance distinctly advanced his reputation: he was then, with his handsome presence, a perfect Alfred Evelyn. Mr. Archer also made a distinct hit, on his introduction to the London stage, by his rendering of 'Deadly' Smooth.

The success of the comedy was very great, and the critics were unanimous in warm praise of the production. A few lines from a journal not given to excessive praise shall precede by way of preface a letter from the distinguished author of the play:

'From the current blemishes of English acting the Prince of Wales's company is to a great extent free. No attempt is made by any one of its members to eclipse his fellows, or to monopolize either the space on the boards, or the attention of the audience. No piece is presented in such a state of unpreparedness that the first dozen performances are no better than rehearsals; no slovenliness in the less important accessories of the play is permitted. A nearer approach accordingly than elsewhere in England can be found to that *ensemble* it is the boast of the Comédie Française to encourage, is witnessed. Actors are measured, so to speak, by their parts, and are only to take such as fit them. Mrs. Bancroft herself, with an artistic feeling to be expected from her, accepts a subordinate character. The example she sets is followed, and, as a result, the performance takes the town with a sort of wonder.'—*Athenæum*, May 18, 1872.

'12, Grosvenor Square, *May* 10, 1872.

'DEAR MADAM,—Our mutual friend, Mrs. Lehmann, I trust conveyed to you my high appreciation of the remarkable skill and

ability with which the comedy of *Money* has been placed on your stage. But I feel that I ought to thank you, in words not addressed through another, for the gratification afforded me on Saturday last.

'Had the play been written by a stranger to me, I should have enjoyed extremely such excellent acting; an enjoyment necessarily heightened to an author whose conceptions the acting embodied and adorned.—Truly and obliged, LYTTON.

'To Mrs. Bancroft.'

Mrs. Frederick Lehmann, who was one of the party in the author's box, soon afterwards included us in a charming dinner-party at the Woodlands, when the guests invited comprised Lord Lytton, the Lord Chief Justice, and Wilkie Collins. It was at that time we first saw the then freshly-painted portrait of Nina Lehmann (now Lady Campbell), a picture of lovely childhood which would alone immortalize the brush of Sir John Millais.

The enthusiasm the production provoked, and the great demand to see it, soon convinced us that we should have to stop the run of the play to fulfil engagements we had entered into some months before to go down to Manchester at the end of July for a fortnight, and then to Liverpool for three weeks, to give a few performances there of *Caste* and *School;* otherwise *Money* might safely have been played throughout the summer, had we been inclined to abandon our holiday. This, however, we never did, and resolved again to let things take their course, trusting to the attraction of Lord Lytton's comedy being firm enough to stand the break, and earn a fresh career when we reopened our theatre in the autumn.

The increase of fame and managerial reputation which followed on the success of this production, the most ambitious we had yet attempted, added, indirectly, largely to our circle of friends in the artistic and literary worlds, and brought us many social pleasures. The early summer passed happily away, and the season, which was with one exception (that in which we produced *School*) the most successful we yet had known, came to a close, perforce, on July 27th.

The next day we journeyed down to Manchester, or rather to Alderley Edge, a few miles away, where, at an excellent hotel, we lived for the fortnight we were acting at the Prince's Theatre; Mr. Hare and Mr. Coghlan also did the same. In their company the days were pleasantly passed, while the evenings were cheered by the enthusiasm of Manchester play-goers, which is well known to all good actors who have been there. Staying in this way in the country necessitated our going to and fro by train, and the compartment on our return journey was often partly occupied by visitors to the theatre who had just seen the play, and who, in their ignorance of our identity with Hawtree and Polly Eccles, or Jack Poyntz and Naomi Tighe, amused us immensely by the frank interchange of their impressions of those and the other personages. It

is easy to recall now Hare's comic change of countenance when the doings of Sam Gerridge were openly discussed in his presence.

We then went on to visit our well-tried friends in Liverpool, who seemed as glad to see us, and welcomed us as warmly as before. Hare and Coghlan also had lodgings there, in the same house as ourselves ; a proof that we had not quarrelled very much. One day during our stay we all arranged to have a country drive, and walked to some livery stables in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant to order a carriage. On our arrival we could not find a creature ; the yard seemed quite deserted, and we concluded that all the vehicles must be out on hire for some special occasion, for there was not even a gig to be seen anywhere. We rang the ostler's bell, but no one answered the summons, so there we stood, among the empty coach-houses and loose boxes, with silence everywhere around, not knowing what to do. We were on the point of leaving, when Hare remarked that the loose boxes, with their upright bars, half-way from the top, looked very like wild beasts' cages, and, as he said this, went into one of them. He closed the door after him, and immediately proceeded to give an imitation of a caged lion. He walked up and down, close to the bars, peering through them exactly like some wild animal in the Zoo, showing his teeth and making hideous noises. The imitation was very funny, and, encouraged by our amusement, Hare continued his performance, prowling, peering, and snarling, quite innocent of the tardy arrival of a great, hulking ostler-fellow, who was standing gaping at him like a country chawbacon, with his eyes and mouth wide open. Suddenly Hare caught sight of the man, and at once tried to make a rapid exit ; but the door of the impromptu cage would not open, and there stood the highly-amused yokel, enjoying the fun which had been accidentally provided for him, while poor Hare became more and more furious at being caught, as he afterwards said, 'making a fool of himself to a grinning idiot,' without being able to get away. At last the man extricated him, and Hare left the place as quickly as his legs would take him, the ostler looking after him still with an empty grin upon his face, evidently thinking him some harmless lunatic, or the clown from a neighbouring circus. The whole affair was so ludicrous, the situation so extremely comic, that we all laughed until we felt perfectly ill. In fact, as we followed Hare's retreating and indignant figure down the street, we laughed till the people stood and gazed, and must have thought us mad as well.

Our engagement ended on Saturday, August 31st, and at the close of it, it so chanced that our old friend Edmund Yates arrived in Liverpool, bound on his journey for fame and fortune in America. His last hours in England were spent with us, and, of course, we saw him off. We accompanied him on the tug, and went with him on board the Cunard ship *Cuba*, remaining until the last signal to leave for shore was given, and introduced him to a friend of ours,

who was going to be a fellow-passenger to New York. This gentleman had a peculiar facial expression, which gave him the appearance of a swollen cheek after severe toothache, and which made one eye look as if it were always winking. After a last 'Good-bye,' we left them; and, as we steamed away, they both stood watching us. Edmund Yates looked so sad and thoughtful, and there was such a solemn look upon his face, as he waved his adieux, that, by way of cheering him at the last moment, it was impossible for Mrs. Bancroft to resist the temptation (while our friend looked another way) of giving a facial imitation of his peculiarity. This had the desired effect on Yates; for he went off into a fit of genuine, hearty laughter, and has often said since that he shall never forget the incident, as it put his thoughts into a happier groove, and did him good. So our oblivious friend, who was none the worse for it, contributed innocently to this change of feeling.

This proved, from then till now, our last visit to other cities, for as our work grew harder, our holiday became more precious after the strain of a long London season; so that, not wilfully, but always with regret, we have year by year refused the tempting offers that have come to us from the great provincial towns, and, maybe, it will only be to say good-bye professionally that we shall ever go to some of them again.

A BACHELOR HOLIDAY.

This was the last year of the German gaming-tables, and never having seen them, I resolved upon a hurried run abroad. I had so short a time at my disposal that the rapid travelling would have been too hard for Mrs. Bancroft, and I invited my friend Coghlan to go with me, who was throughout the trip a delightful companion and knew the Continent well. After acting in Liverpool on the Saturday, we caught the night mail and travelled up to London, leaving the docks at noon on Sunday, September 1st, by the old *Baron Osy* for Antwerp.

After a good and well-earned night's rest, I woke in the waters of the Scheldt. As we neared Antwerp I stood at daybreak on the deck, gazing at the lace-like tower of its beautiful cathedral, when suddenly the biggest of its bells quite startled me by powerfully telling out the hour of six, which was followed by such a merry peal from its smaller brethren, that it almost sounded like laughter at the solemnity of their companion. We only stayed a few hours in the quaint old city, but of them made good use—although with terribly crazy speed; I remember especially how strange the little milk-carts looked as they were drawn about the streets by dogs. We then took the train to Brussels, and arrived in time for *déjeuner* at the Belle Vue, where, I recollect, we met Sir Henry de Bathe—surely one of the handsomest men who ever stepped. The day was passed in 'doing' the city *à l'Américaine*. Hot weather and heavy travelling told upon us both, for we nearly fell asleep in our stalls at the Park Theatre in the evening. I really only run through

this account of our brief bachelor holiday, of which I never kept a note, to tell where we went, and how many glimpses we had of things and places, in a fortnight, not with any ridiculous idea of having seen them properly. The next day we went by train to Cologne, arriving in time to see the great Dom and many of the city's sights, including part of a German play. On the Wednesday morning, after an early swim in its rapid waters, we started up the Rhine by steamer and greatly enjoyed this lazy day, the whole experience being new to me. How delightful was this first experience of its castles, its legends, and its villages dotted about among the vineyards on the hills, each looking, in the distance, very like a box of eighteen-penny German toys, and sixpence extra for the church. We landed in the evening at Biebrich, and then drove on to Wiesbaden, arriving there in time to see the last half-hour's play at the tables, which struck me as rather a *bourgeois* five-franc sort of business. We looked in upon the play again in the morning, and, after a charming walk about the pretty neighbourhood, took train for Homburg, where we found the play much higher and apparently a far more serious matter. Several remarkable 'punters,' who had spent not only their money but their lives at the 'Board of Green Cloth,' were pointed out to us, some of whom had strange and awful faces, looking, indeed, akin to hungry birds of prey. On the Kursaal Terrace we were so lucky as to meet, among other friends, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, and, later on, passed part of a merry evening at their rooms in Ferdinand Strasse. In the morning we went on to Baden Baden, pausing for a brief stay at Frankfort, where we drove through the interesting old Judengasse, which was not then demolished. In the afternoon we reached our destination just in time, I recollect, to see the return from the races, which then were on. We stopped at the Hôtel de Russie, and resolved to remain two days there, the first time we had yet done so in any place since we started. This allowed us to see something of the gaiety, as it was the height of the Baden season; to visit the Alte Schloss, endeared to me by *Play*, and often to watch the tables or to sit outside the rooms and listen to the music of Strauss's splendid band, which played his lovely valses, conducted by himself, and in a way that recalled the fact of my having seen Jullien in my youth, when he led concerted music at the Surrey Gardens. We then found that in six days we had seen so much, and, having still a full week before us, we decided, after a fearful combat with Bædecker and Murray, upon a rapid peep at Switzerland. At the station, where we took train to Bâle, I remember being much amused by a young English girl, who recognised me, quoting my catchword in *Money*, 'I don't see what harm it can do me,' in answer to some remark made by one of her companions. In the evening, when we arrived at the old Trois Rois, I recollect reading of the death of 'Billy' Sams, which had occurred a few days before at Folkestone.

I pause for a moment to wonder if anyone will remember who 'Billy' Sams was. Well, William Raymond Sams was a theatrical librarian. He lived at the corner of St. James's Street and Pall Mall, although really having the air of a man whose home was more likely to be at White's or Arthur's. Everybody knew him in those days, and everybody liked him. He was quite a character, and more like a 'buck' of former times, with his wonderful snuff-boxes, his 'clouded cane,' his long fur coat, and his old-world, courtly ways. He rejoiced in telling stories of Louis Napoleon, to whom, in his exile, he had shown services which were afterwards most graciously remembered at the Tuileries; and, more than all this, he was a warm-hearted and charitable man.

We left Bâle by the very early morning train for Lucerne. Oh! what a scramble it all was—but how enjoyable then—just catching the boat for Fluellen, and breakfasting on deck, not to lose the beauties of the lake. We then drove up the grand St. Gothard Pass—the first I ever crossed—as far as Andermatt, where we stayed the night—not a bad day's travelling. At Göschenen we passed the opening of the great tunnel, which had just been begun that year, and I had my first view of the weird and rugged grandeur of the Devil's Bridge, with its never-ceasing roar of falling waters, as the shades of evening fell—a change indeed, in four-and-twenty hours, from the linden-trees of Baden. The magnet of the mountains proved very strong with me, for every year since I have felt myself drawn irresistibly towards them. In the morning, very early again, we started by diligence over the Furka Pass, where, at the little inn on its summit, is framed the page of the visitors' book which contains the Queen's signature as 'Countess of Kent.' Then we surged down the zigzags to the Rhone Glacier Inn, driving on afterwards to Brieg, where we arrived at nightfall after a fourteen hours' varied journey.

The next day was an easy one, spent in loitering away the morning, for we only went to Martigny; and a desolate, depressing halting-place I thought it. The railway was not open then all the way, and we had to go there partly by road. After a good night's rest we walked, on a broiling hot day, over the Tête Noir to Chamounix; being followed by a truck which, drawn by a mule, carried our luggage. The little vehicle also served to carry a good deal more of our clothing, for the heat grew so intense that, on our way, we imitated the amusing performer in the circus, who strips off one article of clothing after another, until prudence compels him to stop. I remember, also, as we rested for a little while after luncheon, trying to sleep on some logs of wood outside the inn, when Coghlan, with brutal enjoyment, knowing my terror of reptiles, destroyed my hopes of slumber by suggesting that I had chosen a spot which looked like the home of snakes.

The weather was absolutely perfect, but almost tropical. We were met at every turn by glorious views, culminating in the superb

Mont Blanc range and its wonderful glaciers and Aiguilles as approached by Argentière.

In all my life I think I can safely say I have never felt so tired as on that night. I almost feel the pain when I think of what I suffered as we went up never-ending stairs at Chamounix to the double-bedded room which was all the accommodation a crowded hotel could give us. We both nearly fell asleep over dinner, and I recall, distinctly, my one anxiety when we went to bed was to leave Coghlan the responsibility of putting out the lights.

Our stay was very brief, for we were obliged to hurry on to Geneva. There we put up at the Hôtel de la Paix, and in the evening went to the play. On the next day we learnt by the firing of guns and a festive display of bunting that the *Alabama* claims had just been settled, the Conference having been held at Geneva. I found that England's representative — Lord Chief Justice Cockburn—was staying at the Hôtel des Bergues ; so I lost no time in calling upon him. What a wonderful voice that man was gifted with ! The sound of it still lingers plainly in my memory. The circumstance reminds me of a characteristic letter Mrs. Bancroft had received from the Lord Chief just before he started on this mission, and which may fairly have its place here :

'40, Hertford Street, Mayfair, *Tuesday*.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I should be delighted to dine with you, as you so kindly wish ; but, alas ! I am just leaving for Geneva. Your note makes me wish the *Alabama* had gone to the bottom of the sea the day she was launched !—In utmost haste, very truly yours, A. E. COCKBURN.'

I recall an evening also when the Lord Chief dined with us, the late Mr. Critchett being among our guests, who, before we went down to dinner, asked to be introduced to Sir Alexander. Mrs. Bancroft did so in these words : 'Will you allow me, dear Chief, to present to you Mr. Critchett, the celebrated oculist ? As Justice is blind, you may find him a most useful man.' To which Sir Alexander replied, in his genial and courtly manner, 'If, when you first lift the film from my eyes, you will permit me to gaze on Mrs. Bancroft, I shall thank you, sir.'

This rush through Switzerland had only occupied six days ; at the end of them we took the afternoon express to Paris, travelling in the same compartment as Mr. Evarts, the distinguished American diplomatist, fresh from his *Alabama* victory, and early on Sunday morning—barely a fortnight after leaving London—we were at the Grand Hotel. This was the year following the Commune and the siege of Paris, so that many of the hideous marks left by them on the fair city's face were still plainly visible. We saw much that could be seen in eight-and-forty hours, including a performance of *L'Aventurière* at the Français by Madame Arnould-Plessy, not long before that once fine actress left the stage.

We were at home again on Tuesday, September 17th, Baden-Baden and Paris being the only places since we left in which we had slept two nights. This was the first time I had ever been further abroad than Paris, and the trip was only marred by the regret that my wife had not been with me; however, I resolved that I would retrace much of the ground in her companionship in the following year, for the early gaze, hurried though it was, at things and places then so strange, but which since have grown familiar, had left a deep and distinct impression on my mind, in spite of the different countries we visited, the various sights we saw, and the many miles we travelled in those sixteen days, which to me seemed more like sixty.

A RIVERSIDE EPISODE, BY MRS. BANCROFT.

While my husband was tearing, in the hurried way he has described, over the Continent, I was at peace in my sister's cottage by the beautiful Thames, and will tell a little story of a homely woman who lived not far from it, and to whom my sister had shown some kindnesses. One day I looked in at a small sweet-stuff shop she kept, and where I had often been before, but not to eat the acid-drops or bull's-eyes which graced the tiny window in a single row of greenish glass-bottles, and which had lost their freshness of colour, and stuck together as if to keep one another warm. They looked sickly, pale, and withered up, and very far from being in their first youth; the sun of many summers had faded them, and the chills of many winters had shrivelled them. I made my way to the cramped sitting-room, which served as kitchen, dining-room, and nursery, where I was greeted by several little voices, some laughing, some crying. There was the mistress of the house holding a baby at her breast with one hand, and combing the hair of an older baby with the other, while the rest of the progeny were scattered about the room. One was playing with a doll all bruises and cracks, which looked weary of being tossed and dropped, clad in a scrap of faded red cotton, and its remnant of hair hanging by a thread. One eye had disappeared, and the other had a wild, mad stare, as much as to say, 'A little more of this, and I must shriek!' A boy, to whom a handkerchief would have been a comfort, was seated at the window with a slate which he would scrape with a pencil held in a perpendicular position, making my teeth feel as if I had been eating lemons all day. The poor woman appeared rather unamiable, and I asked her how she was. She replied, 'Oh, mum, I'm as well as can be expected, but I'm worrited a good deal! You can't drag up a family loik this 'ere without being worrited, you know, and I'm worrited more than most folks, leastways as I knows on.' 'I am sorry to hear this,' I replied; 'a family is always an anxiety, but then there is not one of them that you would like to lose.' 'Lord forbid, mum, say I! I love 'em all; but I can't 'elp being a bit anxious, and I shows it in my face, I dare say. But my 'usband is

the most inconsiderestist man I knows. Last night he comes 'ome at six o'clock for 'is tea. I'd done a hard day's washin', and I was that tired, mum, I could 'ardly 'old up my 'ead. Well, he comes in, sits him down, and begins his tea; then, quite sudden, he looks at me and he says, "Why, missus, ye're a lively one, I *don't* think! I comes 'ome tired from work, and wants to see yer 'appy. Why, yer looks as if yer 'ad lost 'arf-a-crown and found a button. Why don't yer larf?" "Larf!" I says, "larf! It's all very well for you to talk; while ye're at work in the fields, you 'ave yer pals to talk to, and to eat yer bit o' dinner with, and yer 'ave the clear air to enjoy it all in. Here am I stuck at 'ome with six brats wot's a-fightin' and squallin' all day long. *What's there to larf at in that?* I 'ave a babby to nuss, what's that weak as the doctor says I ought to drink porter, and where is it to come from? as I can't sell a single acid-drop, 'cos the parents says they be bad for the teeth, and there the blessed things stick in them bottles a starin' at me till I'm sick o' the sight o' 'em. *What's there to larf at in that?* There's Liza in bed with measles, and she 'as to be watched noight and day, and fed on sulphur to draw it out on the surface, so I don't get no sleep. *What's there to larf at in that?* Then there's Johnny with his 'ead that bad, wot's brought on by the school teachers a-crammin' verses into it. The doctor says that the lad'll 'ave absence on the brain, and wake some morning a stark hidiot. *What's there to larf at in that?* I looks in the glass, and I can see myself a-getting older and uglier every day. *What's there to larf at in that?*"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SEASON OF 1872-73.

Resumption of *Money*—Deaths of Miss O'Neil (Lady Becher), Edwin Forrest, and Lord Lytton—Letter from Charles Mathews—Reading of *Man and Wife* by Wilkie Collins—Its production—The author on the first night—A country tour started—The play a great favourite with the royal family—A difficulty over a visit of the Prince of Wales—A domestic incident—Death and funeral of Macready—Anecdotes of the great actor—The 'Lambs'—An adventure—Withdrawal of *Man and Wife*—Letter from Wilkie Collins—*Caste* at the Standard Theatre—A trip abroad together—Varied experiences *en route*.

On Saturday, September 21st, the theatre was re-opened, when our performance of *Money* was resumed, the only change in the cast being the substitution of Miss Lydia Foote, who rejoined the company, for Miss Brough, as Clara Douglas. The old comedy, notwithstanding the considerable break that had occurred in its run, again stood our friend, and proved that its career was by no means over, for it continued to attract fine audiences throughout the autumn and the early winter.

Satisfactory as this state of things was to the treasury, it was not to the advantage of this then unthought-of book. There not being consequently many events of great moment concerning ourselves to write about, we may be allowed a short pause to refer briefly to other events of interest, at least in our theatrical world, which happened about this time.

On October 29th, a great actress of years gone by—the once famous Miss O'Neil, afterwards Lady Becher—passed quietly away at the age of eighty, fifty-two years after her retirement from the stage. The announcement of her death, in fact, came as a surprise to many, who little thought a contemporary of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons at the close of their careers, and one who had acted in her youth the companion parts with Edmund Kean when he first electrified the town by his genius, had lingered until then upon the scene.

Miss O'Neil was the daughter of a country actor, and passed her early life upon the stage. She excelled in tragic parts, and, beyond question, was a highly gifted actress. Hazlitt denies her the power of beauty, to the influence of which, he asserts, she owed but little. Her fame and fortune were quickly earned, for she only acted in London some three or four seasons; so great, however, was her popularity, that she is said to have made even the unapproachable Siddons gently murmur at 'the inconstancy of the public.' All that we can personally relate of this light of other days is, that when quite an old lady she asked to be taken to see the portrait of herself which now adorns the staircase of the Garrick Club. As she stood in front of this full-length representation of herself in years gone by, after quietly gazing upon it for some little time, she burst into a flood of tears.

Another death occurred soon afterwards, which robbed America of her most powerful tragedian, Edwin Forrest, who must at one time have worthily been numbered among the mighty actors. He will be, perhaps, best remembered in this country as the rival of Macready: so fiercely did the tide of jealousy flow, indeed, as to be the cause of the serious riots at the Astor House, New York, when Macready last acted there; for which, justice compels the statement, the impetuous and strongly democratic temperament of the eminent American actor was, in the main, responsible. Forrest destroyed his reputation very much by lingering too long upon the stage, a fault very common, it would seem, in our profession.

Early in the new year, on January 18th, the eminent author of the play we were still acting died at Torquay after a short illness. Indeed, it was only a few days before that his son, Mr. Robert Lytton (now the Earl and Ambassador to France), who had been for some time abroad, did us the honour to seek our acquaintance, inclosing a letter of introduction from Lord Lytton. This led to a long talk about our production of *Money*, which 'Owen Meredith' arranged to see on the evening following our conversation, and just before his summons to his father's death-bed.

We had remained in frequent communication with Lord Lytton and only a very short time before the unexpected close of his life received the following interesting letter from Knebworth :

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Pray excuse the liberty I take in this note. A lady of my acquaintance has a daughter about the age of thirteen, who has conceived a strong predilection for the stage, and seems, from what I hear, to give promise of qualifications likely to achieve success in that profession. I have ventured to advise the lady, before she either thwarts or encourages her daughter's inclinations, to give the child a few lessons in elocution and the rudiments of the actor's art, by some experienced teacher who will candidly say, after a short trial of the pupil's natural gifts, whether they *do* justify the choice of a profession in which young persons are so apt to suppose that they must have a talent for that which they have only a fancy for.

'Will you kindly inform me if you know of any such teacher, whose frank opinion of the pupil's chance of success as an actress could be fairly relied upon ?

'Though a child of thirteen is very young to raise the question as to her future profession, yet I have a strong belief that one who has a real genius for the stage shows it very early ; and if this child has not such genius it would be more easy to divert her mind from the idea now than it might be later.

'With repeated apologies for the trouble I give you, for which my only excuse is that I know no one whose opinion and advice on such a subject I would so readily take, believe me, your obliged servant, LYTTON.'

It may be of some interest to state that on looking back at the receipts of the theatre, we find that for about a week immediately after Lord Lytton's death they increased.

To turn to happier subjects, we give the reader the words of a characteristic letter received at this time from the delightful comedian, and now old friend, Charles Mathews, to whose hospitality we owed many happy evenings :

'Nice, *January* 19, 1873.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—It is hard to be obliged to come indoors on such a heavenly day to write a letter on business, and you will no doubt think it harder to be obliged to read it. But friendship calls, and I sacrifice myself upon its altar. Do thou likewise.

'A very nice fellow, Captain ——, now in the far west of America, has written a comedy. ("O Lord !" I hear you say.) It is peculiar and strictly military. Now, all I ask of you is to read it, have the parts copied out and produce it, playing, of course, the principal part yourself—nothing more. Your new piece, of course, will not run more than two or three years, and then you will have this ready to fall back upon. The human mind naturally looks forward, and managers cannot make their arrangements too soon. If by any

unforeseen, though most improbable, chance you may not fancy the piece (such things have happened), please drop me a swee' little note, so charmingly worded that the unhappy author may swallow the gilded pill without difficulty. There is something in the piece, or I would not inflict it upon you. If well dressed, and carefully put upon the stage, it *might* be effective.

'This is what is called writing just *one line*. You will of course say it "wants cutting," like the piece. So I will cut it—short.—With kind regards, faithfully yours, C. J. MATHEWS.

'On reading this rigmarole, I find I have only used the word "piece" four times. When you give my letter to the copyist, you can make the following alterations: For "piece" (No. 1) read "play." For "piece" (No. 2) read "production." For "piece" (No. 3) read "work." For "piece" (No. 4) read "comedy."'

We may mention that in the early days of the Prince of Wales's management we constantly received manuscripts, written by aspiring dramatists, of every sort and kind of play—tragedies, comedies, farces, and burlesques — all accompanied by letters from the anxious authors, containing a sentence to this effect: 'I am emboldened to send you my play, as Mr. Charles Mathews assures me in a letter that, in his opinion, it is exactly suited in every way to the Prince of Wales's Theatre.' We eventually found means to retaliate upon the comedian for his amiable practical joke.

Meanwhile, we had asked Wilkie Collins to read his long-postponed *Man and Wife* to the company. This he did with great effect and nervous force, giving all concerned a clear insight into his view of the characters; and, indeed, acting the old Scotch waiter with rare ability to roars of laughter. We felt the play required certain alteration which could best be made after some rehearsals, and also were impressed with the necessity to do all that was possible to deserve a success in our first new piece since the Robertson comedies; so we decided, towards this end, to aid the cast to the utmost of our power by Mrs. Bancroft agreeing to play Blanche Lundie, a bright, pretty part, but quite of a secondary order, and by Mr. Bancroft offering to appear as the doctor, an important minor *rôle* confined to a dozen sentences.

We bestowed great pains upon the rehearsals, often having the benefit of the author's presence and assistance, which, when the play was well advanced, proved of real service; he also, in the kindest way, fell in with our views and altered the second act of his play (in which the stage was originally intended to be divided into two rooms—the parlour of the inn at Craig Fernie, and the adjoining pantry of old Bishopriggs) in accordance with our suggestions, and greatly, as he generously admitted, to the advantage of its representation. In this scene we went to unusual pains to realize a storm, and I think electric lightning was then first used, as was also an effect we introduced of moving clouds.

The run of *Money* reached more than two hundred performances, far eclipsing all previous records of that comedy, and having served the exchequer to a greater extent than any of our productions up to that date, excepting only *School*. *Man and Wife* was then acted, for the first time, in the presence of the most brilliant audience, so far as names then known throughout the world in every art and calling went, the theatre had as yet seen assembled within its limited walls. The list would now be but a sad record—so many of them have gone away to the 'Silent Land.'

On Saturday, February 22nd, 1873, will be played

MAN AND WIFE,

A DRAMATIC STORY IN FOUR ACTS, WRITTEN BY WILKIE COLLINS.

SIR PATRICK LUNDIE	MR. HARE.
GEOFFREY DELAMAYN	MR. COGHLAN.
ARNOLD BRINKWORTH	MR. HERBERT.
MR. SPEEDWELL	MR. BANCROFT.
MR. MOY	MR. COLLETTE.
BISHOPRIGGS	MR. DEWAR.
DUNCAN	MR. FRANKS.
LADY LUNDIE	MRS. LEIGH MURRAY.
BLANCHE LUNDIE	MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.)
ANNE SILVESTER	MISS LYDIA FOOTE.
MISTRESS INCHBARE	MISS LEE.

NOTE BY S. B. B.

Wilkie Collins passed almost all the evening in my dressing-room in a state of nervous terror painful to behold, and which I could not have endured but for the smallness of the part I had to play: the author's sufferings were assuaged occasionally by loud bursts of applause, which, fortunately, were just within ear-shot. Only for one brief moment did he see the stage that night, until he was summoned by the brilliant audience to show himself, and to receive their plaudits at the end of the play. Ever modest, ever generous, he largely attributed his success to the acting, and was loud in his admiration, at the final rehearsals, especially of Hare and Coghlan, Miss Foote, and Mrs. Bancroft. I take the opportunity of this note to add that the character I acted did not appear until the middle of the third act of *Man and Wife*, which gave me frequent opportunities at this time of seeing Desclée, who was then fulfilling an engagement at the Princess's Theatre, in early portions of some of her great parts. The impression left on my memory is that she was one of the best and truest actresses who ever adorned the art I follow.

A country tour of the play was soon started, Charles Wyndham being engaged for the part of Geoffrey Delamayn, and Miss Ada Dyas for that of Anne Silvester, who acted with great *éclat* in all the leading provincial theatres. The other principal parts were admirably played by H. B. Conway—his first engagement under

our management—Charles Collette, and Miss Blanche Wilton (Mrs. Collette).

Man and Wife was a favourite play with the royal family; the Prince of Wales saw it twice, and the Princess three times, between the 25th of February and the 4th of March, and again before its withdrawal on July 12th, being then accompanied by the Cesarewitch and Cesarevna of Russia.

The favour thus shown to this production on one occasion caused, indirectly, the plot of a little domestic drama.

The royal box was made by throwing two ordinary private boxes into one, and on a certain Friday night news reached the theatre that it was required for the following evening. The official in charge at the time found that both boxes had been taken—one at the theatre, the other at a librarian's in Bond Street—and that, in fact, nothing remained unlet but a small box on the top tier. Anxious, however, not to disappoint the Prince of Wales, it was decided that every effort should be made in the morning to arrange matters. The box which had been sold at the theatre was kindly given up by the purchaser, and a visit to Bond Street fortunately disclosed the name of the possessor of the other, for it had been let to a regular customer of the librarian, who represented the purchaser as a very agreeable man, who might be induced to either accept the little box on the upper tier, or to go to another theatre instead. The gentleman was a stock-broker, so a messenger was at once sent to his office in the City; when he arrived the man was told by a clerk that his master had just left—Saturday not being a busy day. After a great deal of difficulty, and through representing his errand as of the greatest importance, our invincible messenger succeeded in learning the private address, which was some miles distant, of the possessor of this coveted private box; so away he went, as fast as a hansom would take him, to the suburban residence of the hunted stock-broker, where, on his arrival, the door was opened by a maid-servant. 'Is Mr. —— at home?' 'No, sir.' 'When will he be?' 'Can't say, sir.' 'Won't he be home to lunch?' 'No, sir; master went to Liverpool on business this morning, and won't be back till Monday.'

The door of a room leading from the hall was opened at this moment, and a portly lady appeared upon the scene.

'Went to Liverpool!' echoed the messenger. 'Nonsense; he's going to the Prince of Wales's Theatre this evening, and I've been sent to see if it's possible to exchange the box the gentleman has taken, through some of the royal family coming and wanting it.'

The portly lady now approached, and asked if she could be of any service. The messenger repeated his story, and explained his errand. The lady smiled blandly, and said that if the small box on the upper tier was reserved, matters would no doubt be amicably arranged in the evening, if her husband, Mr. ——, was going to the theatre, so the man went away rejoicing.

At night, not long before the play began, the gentleman, who had in vain been sought so urgently, arrived in high spirits, accompanied by a very handsome lady; the attendants were eagerly on the watch for the presentation of his ticket, on which, of course, was the number of the wanted box, and our manager was in readiness to explain the circumstances, and to beg acceptance of the box reserved instead of it. The gentleman fully bore out the character given him for good-nature, and very kindly agreed to put up with the alteration.

There ended our share in the transaction, but hardly were the unfortunate man and his handsome companion left alone than the portly lady from the suburban residence reached the theatre, and asked to be shown to 'the private box that had been reserved for Mr. ——, in place of the one he had given up that evening by request, as she wished to join the party.' The lady was at once conducted there; the door was opened. Tableau! What explanation was given as to the business-trip to Liverpool we never knew, or whether the third act of this domestic drama was rehearsed later before Sir James Hannen.

Although the production did not achieve the same length of run as some of its predecessors, the receipts for the first sixty or eighty performances were on a par with previous successes. After a time a summer of unusual heat affected the theatres, and in June the fêtes of many kinds given in honour of the Shah of Persia were also detrimental to them.

It is impossible to allow the death of Macready to pass without notice in this book. The great actor of a former generation, who for years had been living very quietly at Cheltenham, died there on April 27th, soon after the completion of his eightieth year. He had retired from the stage in 1851 in the height of his great powers, and is one of the strongest instances of a celebrated actor having resisted every temptation which was offered to him to return to it. His funeral at Kensal Green, on May 4th, attracted an enormous crowd, many old actors who had once been members of his company being present, some of them being thought long since dead. On reading the tablet belonging to his catacomb one could not fail to be struck by the frequent sorrows that had befallen him, and to reflect how much they might be responsible for the constant and reiterated regrets which so abound in Sir Frederick Pollock's interesting book of the tragedian's reminiscences. Much that was beautiful in the character of the great actor may be learnt from a little volume called 'Macready as I Knew Him,' written a few years ago by Lady Pollock.

For a long time his health had been enfeebled, and his last visits to London were to place himself under the care of Sir Henry Thompson. He finally visited a theatre on one of these occasions, when he yielded, although then very infirm, to the persuasions of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins to go with them to see Fechter

play his own old part of Claude Melnotte in the *Lady of Lyons*. Macready sat in silence nearly all the evening, and when the curtain fell he merely muttered, 'Very pretty music!' It is dangerous to tell anecdotes of any known actors of the past, lest they should before have been in print, which doubtless is the case with a story told to us years ago by one of the past generation of tragedians. Macready was playing *Hamlet* in a country theatre, and during rehearsals had so severely found fault with the actor, a local favourite, who took the part of the King, that his Majesty determined at night to be revenged upon the great man by reeling, when stabbed by Hamlet, to the centre of the stage (instead of remaining at the back), and falling dead upon the very spot Macready had reserved for his own final acting before he expired in Horatio's arms. Macready groaned and grunted, 'Die further up the stage, sir.' 'What are you doing down here, sir?' 'Get up, and die elsewhere, sir,' when, to the amazement of the audience, the King sat bolt upright upon the stage, and said, 'Look here, Mr. Macready, you had your way at rehearsal, but *I'm king now, and I shall die where I please!*'

Another little anecdote told sometimes of other tragedians, but which really happened to Macready, may be worth repeating. He depended very much in Virginius—one of his finest parts—upon a very subordinate actor's emphasis and delivery of a certain line. At rehearsal on one occasion he was very patient, and repeated the words, as he wished them spoken, over and over again to the young actor, who, in vain, tried to catch the tone of his instructor. At last Macready said, 'Surely, man, it's easy enough—can't you speak the words as I do?' 'No, sir, I can't,' was the actor's reply, 'or I might be in your position instead of earning only thirty shillings a week.'

AN ADVENTURE BY MR. BANCROFT.

I will turn from these memories of a great actor of the past to tell a story concerning chiefly two actors of the day—Hare and myself.

A little club, known as the 'Lambs,' which had a short life but a merry one, flourished at this time. Its members were limited to twelve original 'Lambs,' and twelve subsequently elected 'Lambkins.' Among the founders and first members were John Hare, Douglas (now Mr. Justice) Straight, Charles Collette, Talbot Smith, Captain Heathorn, Lord Newry (now Earl of Kilmorey), H. J. Tufton (now Lord Hothfield), H. J. Montague, Frederick Jameson, and myself. Comyns Carr, Arthur Blunt, Seymour Trower, Montagu Williams, and, I think, Corney Grain also joined 'The Fold,' in which I can recall many a delightful meeting; our number at table, by the way, being constantly fated to be thirteen, an accident which I can vouch for not being followed by the frequently expected superstitious consequences.

It was an annual custom to have a special Sunday dinner in June, which was called 'The Washing,' and was held at Maidenhead.

Those who could spare the time went down to Skindle's on Saturday and remained till Monday ; the actor members generally joined the others on Sundays, in time for the pleasant boating party of the afternoon.

This year Hare and myself resolved to take the midnight train from Paddington to Maidenhead, there to have supper and be ready for an entire happy day in the morning. We started with this intention, in spite of a downpour of rain. When we reached Slough we thought the train was detained a long while at the station, and asked a porter why we didn't go on to Maidenhead.

'Maidenhead, sir? why, you're in the slip carriage for Windsor.' 'Windsor!' said I. 'Windsor!' echoed Hare. 'Yes, gentlemen ; Windsor. Will you go on there, or get out here? Look sharp, gentlemen, please.'

We had hardly a moment to decide between sleeping at the White Hart, or finding a fly to take us on at once to Maidenhead ; but settled on the latter, and bundled out of the railway-carriage with our handbags and wraps on to the Slough platform. It was now one a.m., and the rain simply came down in sheets. Almost as if by magic the lamps were extinguished, leaving the whole place in darkness, and we got little comfort from a sleepy porter as to the chance of a fly—even he vanished directly the station was shut up, and we found ourselves in a sorry plight. Every effort to rouse anyone at the neighbouring houses proved fruitless, the only answer to the noises we made being their echoes and the barkings of disturbed watch-dogs. The rain was far too heavy for our umbrellas to be of their proper use, so we shouldered our well-laden Gladstone bags upon the handles of them, and resolved to tramp to our destination, if we could but find the way, which, luckily, Hare hoped he could remember. Our trials were aggravated by the want of food, for we had relied upon a good supper at Maidenhead, and by the state of the weather ; there was no moon, and the unceasing downpour made it impossible to light a cigar or pipe. We started with spirits at a low ebb, and were often ankle-deep in water as we walked along. After trudging about a mile perhaps, we reached what looked in the darkness like a roadside ale-house. We hammered at the door and shouted to be let in. Presently from a bedroom window, instead of being offered the hospitality we hoped to purchase, we were threatened in violent language, made still more offensive by a strong Berkshire dialect, with the contents of a double-barrelled gun, if we didn't at once move on. Nothing would convince the wretch that we weren't tramps on our way to Ascot, it being but a day or two before the race meeting.

At this juncture Hare groaned piteously, and I just caught an expression on his face, which so strangely mingled with his bedraggled and mud-bespattered appearance, that, for the life of me, I couldn't resist regarding the whole adventure from the comic side, and burst out laughing. Hare's groans increased ; the words may

be little to repeat, but the tone in which he rebuked me lives plainly in my remembrance, as he said, 'Oh, Bancroft! don't laugh; don't exhaust yourself; don't risk more than a few cheering words to help us bear this!' I really grew a little alarmed soon afterwards, for the awful weather culminated in a thunderstorm, and we were very uncertain of our way, upon which we met no other travellers.

We reached, just as the dawn was breaking, a cross-road with, happily, a tall finger-post to direct our choice, of which we stood in need, for Hare's remembrance of the way forsook him. Although the rain had now somewhat abated, I was helpless, through my short sight. Eventually Hare climbed on my back, and, after many struggles with fusees and matches, read what the sign-post had to tell us, the remaining distance proving to be less than we had thought. Spurred by this intelligence, and finding ourselves on the right road, able also at last to light our pipes, we proceeded more cheerfully, being now certain of our route, and at last reached Skindle's Hotel, very like water-rats, ravenously hungry, horribly tired, and heartily glad to get rid of the weight of our luggage. The next difficulty was, how to obtain an entrance. In sheer desperation we fixed haphazard on a window at which to throw pebbles, and by great good luck had hit upon the bedroom of Mr. Skindle himself, who then personally managed the hotel. After speaking to us from the window, he soon came down and let us in, telling us how we had been given up after the last train arrived without us. We declined to move a yard beyond the entrance-hall by way of a dressing-room, but got out some flannels, and left our saturated boots and clothes on the bench that stood there. We then worried, like wolves, the food that our host kindly fetched from the larder, and afterwards, fortified with brandies and sodas, crawled upstairs to a double-bedded room; a very happy termination to our dread, an hour or two before, of being benighted. We laughed as heartily as our companions the next morning over our adventure, and soon forgot the damp side of it.

For the sake of recording a clever retort, I may recall a custom at the weekly meeting of the club, to which its members were restricted, when the 'Shepherd' of the evening, as the chairman was called, had to make one speech, and was at liberty to demand a reply from any 'lamb' or 'lambkin' present. On one occasion, when Montague was President, his evil star led him in his speech to chaff, in rather a merciless fashion, a new recruit to the fold, Comyns Carr, whose power of ready response was not then so well known as now, but was never more clearly shown than in his reply, one sentence of which, I remember, described his assailant as 'A pantaloon without his maturity, and a clown without his colour!' Montague's face at this unexpected retort was a study. Poor fellow, when shortly afterwards he went to America, he there founded a club under the old name, which existed until lately, and, I believe, still flourishes, in New York.

Having now broken the spell, as it were, and proved that we could be successful in plays widely different from those which first made the reputation of our management, we thought we might commence our next season with a revival of *School*, hoping for a success from it that would at least last long enough for us to find another new work.

In July, we wrote to Wilkie Collins to say that his play would exhaust its attraction by the end of the season, and must then be withdrawn. This was his answer to the letter:

'90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square, *July* 17, 1873.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—Thank you heartily for your kind letter. I should be the most ungrateful man living if the result of *Man and Wife* did not far more than merely "satisfy" me. My play has been magnificently acted, everybody concerned in it has treated me with the greatest kindness, and you and Mrs. Bancroft have laid me under obligations to your sympathy and friendship for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. The least I can do, if all goes well, is to write for the Prince of Wales's Theatre again, and next time to give you and Mrs. Bancroft parts that will be a little more worthy of you.—Ever yours, WILKIE COLLINS.'

The season closed on Friday, August 1st, *Man and Wife* having been acted one hundred and thirty-six times.

On the following Monday we commenced an engagement we had entered into to produce *Caste* for four weeks at the Standard Theatre, in Shoreditch, having definitely arranged only to appear ourselves for the first twelve nights, as we would not shorten a longed-for holiday which we intended to spend abroad. It was a great experiment to act this delicate comedy in so vast a theatre and before an East-end audience, and we were a little in doubt as to the result; any fears we entertained were soon dispelled, for densely-packed audiences nightly received the play with great enthusiasm, appreciating fully its most tender scenes, and listening with rapt attention even to the chronicles of Froissart which the old Marquise relates to her son. After a fortnight our parts were taken by Miss Augusta Wilton and Mr. Denison, and the remaining performances were thoroughly successful.

The following brief extract from a long article on this engagement bears directly on the way the new audience received the comedy: 'Apart from the perfection of play and players, that East-end theatre was a sight worth going far to see when the play was *Caste*, and the players the Prince of Wales's company. From basement to ceiling within its vast area gathered night after night an interested, intelligent, enthusiastic audience; the cold though confirmed approval of the Prince of Wales's audience was replaced by storms of impulsive applause. It made one think Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, wise as they are, err but in one respect—that of playing

ordinarily in too small a theatre for the attractions they offer and the amazing popularity they command.'

Our first trip together abroad was a very happy one, and, in the time we were able to spare for it, we saw a great deal, and remembered much ; although we committed the error, so common with young tourists, of trying to see more than time and strength will properly allow. Every church of interest, every gallery of pictures, every collection of art treasures, that our path crossed, was hurried through in turn ; while, of course, each waterfall must be looked at, each cave explored—all with a confusing speed that a little experience cures when one begins to learn the value in all ways of repose. A brief itinerary of where we went, and what we did, in the four weeks at our disposal, will give a bare idea of the first Continental scamper we enjoyed together.

We first halted at Brussels, squeezing a rapid rush at its many beauties into six-and-thirty hours (not forgetting to see the horrible pictures in the Wiertz collection). At Cologne, on our first visit together to its magnificent Cathedral, we were fortunate to arrive just in time to witness the impressive and picturesque sight of a military funeral. After a short day at Bonn, where we came in for a musical fête in honour of which the picturesque old town was prettily decorated, we went up the Rhine by boat to Mayence. Among our fellow-passengers on the steamer, who had been engaged professionally the day before, were Madame Schumann (whose acquaintance we were proud to make later on at Signor Piatti's charming villa on the Lake of Como), and the distinguished German singer, Marie Wilt. During the *table d'hôte* dinner, which was served in the saloon, we learnt, through a little note which was sent across the table by an English friend, that 'Marie Wilt' and 'Marie Wilton' were seated side by side.

We stayed some days at beautiful Heidelburg, to thoroughly see the grand old Schloss and its romantic neighbourhood, and also rested for awhile at Baden Baden. The gaming-tables had now vanished, and our amusement took the milder form of drives to Eberstein and in the magnificent Black Forest. This rapid journey through parts of Germany was followed by the same rate of speed in Switzerland. We certainly stayed for breathing time at the Schweizerhof (prince of hotels) at Lucerne, and of course, from there, made the inevitable excursion up the Rigi ; there was only one small inn upon the summit then, and the railway, which we ascended in a thunderstorm, was still a thing to marvel at. No need to tell that we 'did' the mountain in the usual way : we saw the sun set, and were lucky in a wondrous view ; less so in the morning, when we were roused at some unearthly hour by the hideous uproar of an Alpine horn, to see the rising. However, the whole experience was new and delightful then, and we descended to the lake thoroughly pleased, and soon crossed the Brunig to the Giesbach Falls, where we remember first meeting Mr. (now Sir)

John Gorst. There the custom then prevailed at the hotel—growing, one cannot help regretting, more and more uncommon—of being waited on by Swiss maidservants, dressed in the quaint costumes of their different cantons. Of course we saw at night the illuminations of the fine cascade by Bengal lights, which seemed, we thought, a kind of Cremorne-like desecration. [Always fond of swimming, I (S. B. B.) rarely in those days was near a lake or river without indulging a wish to bathe; and I remember distinctly the icy cold water of the Lake of Brienz, which is almost wholly fed by the glaciers, and the warning of the boatman to keep quite close to him.] At Interlaken we stopped for three days, making pretty excursions in its charming neighbourhood, and listening at Lauterbrunnen, for the first time, to the roar of avalanches, which were falling rapidly that season, from the three great peaks—the splendid *Jungfrau* and her two guardians, the *Aïger* and the *Mönch*.

From Interlaken, where the heat was very great, we went by Thun to Berne, paying hurried visits to the bear-pit, and the funny old performing clock (a description of which, years afterwards, 'Lady Henry Fairfax' turned to good account in *Diplomacy*), and heard the organ played; well worth it, but far behind, we thought, the wonderful instruments at Lucerne and Freiberg. Thence we went to the Lake of Geneva, staying at the Beau Rivage on the shore of Ouchy; there again we rested awhile, making a pilgrimage to the Villa Beausite on the outskirts of Lausanne, where John Kemble lived after his retirement from the stage in 1817, and was buried in 1823. With great difficulty we discovered the last resting-place of 'the noblest Roman of them all,' which is in the strangers' quarter of a now unused cemetery on the high road to Berne, some two miles from the town. When at last we found a sexton to unlock the rusty gates, we searched for the vault. The stone was sadly neglected, and the enclosed grave choked with weeds. These, by our directions, were soon cleaned away, making the grave look trim and neat, and we left some flowers in their stead, a small tribute to the memory of a great man. A few years later we went there again, and then found the grave in perfect order, some member of the Kemble family having, doubtless, come to know of its neglected state.

From the shores of the beautiful lake, we went to Martigny, having a great wish to see the monastery of St. Bernard; the journey through the squalid villages and passes on the way, especially Orsières—looking like places that had been sacked during times of warfare, and left so—was disappointing, and our first impression of the aspect of things at our journey's end rather a disillusion, neither monks nor *hospice* being, in a picturesque sense, 'all our fancy painted them.'

An incident of this uphill journey we hesitate to record, because it was to us, and will be thought by those who read it, a disgrace to humanity. We were followed on our way by a small open carriage,

which was drawn by two pretty little Arab ponies, and driven by a man (?) who was accompanied by two young girls. The little vehicle and the almost exhausted but willing animals, we afterwards heard, had been bought outright, and were being cruelly driven day after day by this man, his halts being chiefly for his own refreshment only. All who have mounted to the top of the Great St. Bernard will remember the labour of getting there ; even the strong native horses are spared by their humane masters when they are mounting the steep slopes, but this creature knew not the word *spare*, and whipped the tiny Arabs all the way. When we arrived at the canteen, just before the difficult path to the hospice begins, we left our carriage (?), and mounted mules or walked. It will hardly be believed that this merciless owner of a human shape made the worn-out and already half-dead ponies struggle over the rude, rough path, which was fit only for the sure-footed mules. It was a pitiful sight to watch the strained sinews and the look of despair of these poor beasts ; but remonstrances with the inferior animal who drove them were in vain : the reply received was, 'They are my horses ; I shall do as I please. I don't care if they do die. I've got here now, and I mean to get back to-morrow ; then they may die if they like.' We refrain from revealing the man's nationality, but are glad to say he was not an Englishman.

Let us turn from this brutal experience and tell how, on our arrival at the hospice, we were most kindly received by a young monk : the climate is too severe for old men to stay there any length of time. We arrived, it so happened, on a fast-day ; so our fare was frugal, though ample. Soon after we were safely housed, at the end of a hard journey, two medical students whom we had passed, already looking fagged, on the road, and who had walked all the way from Chamounix, arrived so tired and foot-sore that one of the young fellows fainted as he reached the door, when the kindness shown to him by the monks was beautiful to see.

We passed a pleasant evening, and found the old visitors' books very interesting, as were some of the gifts to the monastery, especially the little piano presented by the Prince of Wales in remembrance of his visit some years before, which, owing doubtless to the altitude, had sadly lost its tone.

The sleeping accommodation was simple but clean, and we were roused early enough in the morning by the bell for matins. In the sharp, crisp air we had a lovely walk round the lake at the top of the pass, being accompanied by some of the famous dogs. We admired the fine brutes all the more after visiting the Morgue and hearing stories of their rescues of many a poor traveller from a shroud of snow. Before we left, we had a wretched example, much commoner than one could believe, we were told, of the parsimony of a visitor with regard to the alms-box—the only method of acknowledgment accepted by the poor monks for the hospitality so generously shown to all comers ; the owner of the little Arab

horses, in spite of a pointed reference in his presence to what was at least hoped for—if not expected—from tourists, took his departure without depositing a single coin!

After a hearty breakfast and all sorts of kind wishes from our self-sacrificing hosts, we started on our journey back to Martigny, and on the following day went—oh, in such a vehicle! the builder of which forgot the springs, and the little road was barely made—over the Tête Noir to Chamounix. There again we halted, in gorgeous weather, for some days, devoting them to the usual experiences of a first visit to the beautiful valley so loved by Albert Smith, and where in its pretty church we read the tablet to his memory. Who will not guess that we went, by the Montanvert, over the Mer de Glace, and crossed the Mauvais Pas; then made excursions on the Glacier des Bossons; in fact, did everything to impress ourselves with the belief that we were already distinguished mountaineers?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEASON OF 1873-74.

Improving the theatre—Revival of *School*—Death of Mr. Wilton—An odd practical joke—Charles Mathews's seventieth birthday—Letter from Mrs. Procter—The renewed prosperity of *School*—Decision to produce the *School for Scandal*—Elaborate preparations for Sheridan's masterpiece—Ten shilling stalls—A Review of the Scenes and Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's performances—'Biafra,' the black page—Letters from Wilkie Collins, William Creswick, W. P. Frith and Walter Lacy—Illness and Death of J. M. Bellew—Considering a new programme—Holiday in Switzerland and Italy—Venice.

AT the commencement of this season, a house in Pitt Street, of which we had obtained a lease, was made to communicate with the theatre, and added greatly to its convenience, but not without a wrench to both of us in obliterating old memories: the former green-room, associated with so many recollections—including the readings of the Robertson comedies—was gone for ever, forming, for the future, part of a much-needed scene-dock; while Mrs. Bancroft's dressing-room, which adjoined it, with its musical remembrance of the old stage-door keeper, was abolished, and had become a property-room. On the other hand, the advantages included valuable additions to our number of rooms, and a new royal box and approaches, with much-increased comfort.

BEGUN BY MR. BANCROFT.

Although *School* had only been originally produced in 1869, and ran for full fifteen months, when we revived the comedy, in addition to ourselves, Mr. Hare and Mr. Glover alone remained to appear in their original parts. This was the cast as we acted the play on

Saturday, September 20th, 1873 : Lord Beaufoy, Mr. Coghlan ; Dr. Sutcliffe, Mr. Collette ; Beau Farintosh, Mr. Hare ; Jack Poyntz, Mr. Bancroft ; Mr. Krux, Mr. Glover ; Mrs. Sutcliffe, Mrs. Leigh Murray ; Naomi Tighe, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft) ; Bella, Miss Fanny Josephs.

The immediate and pronounced success of the revival left our minds at ease for a time, and until we should decide upon a performance to succeed it.

Mr. Wilton's health had for some time been a subject of concern with all his family, and, as the winter approached, his condition grew alarming. On November 26th he died, and was laid at rest a few days afterwards in Norwood Cemetery. It may be mentioned here, that just outside the chapel at this very time, his daughters, by accident, came across a vault, under the shadow of a weeping willow, belonging to his only surviving brother, who now lies in it, and who had expressed his sorrow at not having been made aware of Mr. Wilton's condition, that he might have gone to him : so, although in life they had been parted for many years, in death only a few yards of earth divide them. The world indeed is small !

> 'A sleep without dreams,
> After a rough day of toil,
> Is what we covet most.'

An odd practical joke was played upon me during the early part of the season. As to who was the author of it I never obtained the smallest clue, although it was very much in Sothern's line.

One night when I reached the theatre, the hall-porter, who was for many years in our service, followed me to my dressing-room, and told me, in a nervous sort of way, that a package had arrived for me early that evening by Parcels Delivery, adding, 'I don't like the look of it, sir !' Then, continuing mysteriously, 'And more than that, sir, I don't like the feel of it !' 'Don't like the feel of it ? What do you mean ?' 'Well, sir, it's unpleasant—very unpleasant—to the touch, and I think there's been something alive inside the parcel. I only speak to warn you, sir, because, if you opened it unawares, it might give you a fright !' 'What on earth do you mean ?' I said, getting a little bewildered by the earnest manner of my informant. 'Run down and fetch the parcel, and we'll very soon see the contents.'

The mysterious package was brought up. It was covered with thick brown paper, properly directed, bore the official label of the 'L. P. D. C.,' and was marked '8d. to pay.'

Directly I touched the package I shared the hall-porter's belief, and my thoughts turned first towards the gift of a harmless sucking-pig ; his, I fancy, took a more serious direction. Carefully on our guard, we cut the string, and, after removing a quantity of brown paper, disclosed the body of a dead *ape!* The beast, although it had evidently only been dead a very short time, was

horrible to look at, and certainly, but for the friendly warning I had received, would have alarmed me.

What to do with the wretched brute was my next thought. Charles Collette was a member of our company at the time, and I sent him a message asking if he would come to my room. When I explained the case, I told him that I did not mean to let the practical joke end with me, nor to waste the animal, but should pass it on to someone else. He at once entered into that view of the matter, and after a little thought we fixed on a young actor in the theatre, who had not yet arrived, to be that someone else. Of course the hall-keeper was in the secret, and we had the animal carefully packed up again, washed off the label, and attached it to the fresh covering.

When our victim arrived, he was asked for the eightpence, and then had the parcel sent to his room. Soon there was a wild shriek, and of course Collette and I rushed upstairs to see what was the matter.

After all sorts of cogitations, the poor monkey was left that night in the cellar of the theatre; and, as otherwise no further fun seemed likely to arise from it, we concocted a long letter in French, as though written by a distinguished foreign naturalist, who had by an unfortunate blunder sent the ape to a wrong address, and requested its recipient to be so kind as to re-address the 'rare and very valuable specimen,' to 'Monsieur ——, at ——'s Hotel, *to be called for*.' All these wishes were carefully and promptly obeyed, and, unfortunately, I have no better end to my story. How long the mysterious parcel remained at the hotel before the 'rare and very valuable specimen' it contained too powerfully asserted its presence, I never knew, and, it may be easily guessed, I never inquired.

On the Boxing-day of this year, a dinner-party was given by Charles Mathews, to celebrate his seventieth birthday. After my work, among other friends of 'Everybody's friend,' I went to Belgrave Road, and found the chief object of the festivity still seated in a chair, decorated with garlands of choice flowers, at the largest round table I ever saw in my life. He looked so radiant and well, that when I went up to him and said 'Many happy returns of the day, young Mathews!' to be answered with 'Many thanks, old Bancroft, come and sit down,' it seemed incredible to believe him to be nearly forty years my senior. We had a delightful evening, and it was long before the staircase was deserted. This staircase, as was the case with his former house in Pelham Crescent, it will be well remembered, was rendered remarkable by being covered with drawings of himself in all his early characters. This valuable and unique collection of portraits was subsequently, after the death of Mathews, bought and presented to the Garrick Club by a popular member who has ever been a great lover of the stage, and who has contributed more than one good play to its literature.

As the old year ended so pleasantly, we will begin the record of its successor by a letter from a dear friend since, alas, dead, whose society, for very many years, was a charm to all privileged to enjoy it :

'32, Weymouth Street, Portland Place, *January* 2, 1874.

'My dear Mrs. Bancroft,—It was very like you sending me that pretty little New Year's note.

'I thought I should like to give myself a treat in 1874, and so went to see you. "Time has not touched your infinite variety;" I laughed and cried as I have done before.

'Your note will be placed in my book of letters. I think you shall be put between Dr. Parr and Lord Brougham—no, Naomi Tighe shall be next Lord Byron and Shelley; Jack next, mind. My regards to Mr. Bancroft.—Yours, Anne B. Procter.'

School pursued its prosperous course, and seemed to have almost an enchanted life. Of all its author's works it certainly was the most generally popular; but as the winter approached we felt it would be wrong to try its strength by forcing the revival too far into the season. All we had to fall back upon in the shape of a new play was a charming little piece we had accepted from W. S. Gilbert, under the provisional title of the *White Willow* (which afterwards developed, as will be told, into *Sweethearts*). This we felt would be a most valuable addition to a contemplated revival of *Society;* but we also felt that to again follow Robertson with Robertson would be worse than bad management; so we decided, supported by the remembrance of the success achieved by *Money*, and the importance to the theatre of finding a new part for Mrs. Bancroft of greater value than Georgina Vesey and Blanche Lundie, to go still further to the classics, and venture upon a production of Sheridan's masterpiece, the *School for Scandal*, with a view to presenting the grand old comedy as an exact picture of its period.

The first steps towards this ambition were long and careful visits to both the Print and Reading Rooms in the British Museum, and equally valuable pilgrimages to Knole; this lovely seat I visited in the companionship of Mr. George Gordon, our scenic artist, there to choose such types of rooms as, from their wealth of pictures and old furniture, might serve the purpose best. Months before the date of its production we were at work upon the details of the play. It was impossible to hope for an ideal cast of such a comedy, or to expect that all the members of a company occupied for years almost entirely in modern plays should be perfect in more ambitious work; but in the troupe were several who, owing to early training in country theatres, would be quite at ease in the courtly manners of the patch-and-powder period, while others only needed ample rehearsal to feel perfectly at home. We were indebted to Mr. Coghlan for valuable assistance in some rearrangement of the play, without interfering with its text, and also in placing it upon the stage.

We announced our intended revival in these words : 'Sheridan's comedy, the *School for Scandal*, has been for some weeks in preparation, and will shortly be acted for the first time by the Prince of Wales's company. During the hundred years which have nearly elapsed since its original production, the tastes and requirements of audiences have considerably changed : and the management, therefore, feels assured of not being charged with disrespect to the author of this great play for attempting to heighten the effect of his work by an unexampled attention to the costumes, scenery, and general appointments ; nor by a few transpositions in the sequence of scenes, made with every regard for the integrity of the text.'

We also conceived the happy idea of introducing, for the first time, a minuet in the second act, which since has grown, through being followed in subsequent revivals, to be regarded as part of the play. The general effect of this introduced dance can best be gathered from a reproduction of it on the curtain painted for us, and which is still used at the Haymarket Theatre. It was also the suggestion for a charming picture by Val Prinsep, A.R.A., exhibited in the Royal Academy, and for which I remember giving a sitting ; the sketch of 'The Minuet' the artist kindly gave to Mrs. Bancroft.

The boldest step, perhaps, throughout our management was taken at this stage of it, in my resolve to raise the charge for admission to the stalls to ten shillings, and the prices to other parts of the theatre accordingly. Some action of the kind was rendered imperative in so small a theatre as the Prince of Wales's, to allow such productions as we were then engaged upon to be properly remunerative ; but as the *School for Scandal* had only recently been admirably acted for a long time at another theatre, the moment chosen certainly was dangerous for so courageous an innovation.

When the decision arrived at was conveyed to Bond Street, one of the principal librarians remarked, 'Of course Mr. Bancroft means for the first night only.' When informed that the alteration was intended 'for the future,' the answer was, 'Oh, let Mr. Bancroft have his way ; he will withdraw his intention in a week !' Such, however, was not the case. The bold example was soon followed by the Gaiety Theatre, then by the Lyceum, and afterwards by nearly every manager in London. As the question of 'ten shilling stalls' has since been so often discussed, it may be as well to record how the new custom originated.

The revival of *School* ceased on Wednesday, April 1st. Afterwards the theatre was closed for night rehearsals, and our bold venture was produced on the following Saturday, for which evening we give a copy of the bill of the play :

At eight o'clock, on Saturday, April 4th, 1874 (the ninth anniversary of Mrs. Bancroft's management, which commenced on Easter Eve, 1865), Sheridan's comedy, the *School for Scandal*, will be acted,

for the first time, by the Prince of Wales's company : Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. Hare ; Sir Oliver Surface, Mr. Collette ; Sir Benjamin Backbite, Mr. Lin Rayne ; Sir Harry Bumper, Mr. Craufurd ; Sir Toby, Mr. Campbell ; Joseph Surface, Mr. Bancroft ; Charles Surface, Mr. Coghlan ; Crabtree, Mr. Arthur Wood ; Careless, Mr. Herbert ; Rowley, Mr. R. Cathcart ; Moses, Mr. F. Glover ; Snake, Mr. Newton ; Trip, Mr. Markby ; Lady Teazle, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft) ; Lady Sneerwell, Miss Fanny Josephs ; Mrs. Candour, Mrs. Leigh Murray ; Maria, Miss B. Wilton ; Guests, Musicians, Servants, etc. The sequence of scenes will be as follows : Act I.—Lady Sneerwell's Drawing - room : Morning. Act II.—Lady Sneerwell's Drawing-room : Evening (the *minuet de la cour* will be danced in this scene). Act III., Scene 1.—A Room at Sir Peter Teazle's. Scene 2.—Charles Surface's House : the Lobby. Scene 3.—Charles Surface's House : the Dining Hall. Act IV.—Joseph Surface's Library. Act V.—At Sir Peter Teazle's.

The production of this comedy was so exceptional at the time, that we give an extract from a review which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, and very graphically describes the elaborate attempt we made to picture days gone by :

'There are four complete and accurate pictures of high life at the close of the last century. We are shown society in Lady Sneerwell's drawing-room ; society in Sir Peter Teazle's house ; society at Charles Surface's ; and, finally, a complete insight into the life of Joseph Surface. Come, then, to Lady Sneerwell's. It is the morning of a great rout or assembly. The amber satin curtains are half pulled up the lofty windows. The sunshine falls upon the quilted panels of spotless gold satin. Lady Sneerwell, in powder and brocade, sits sipping her tea out of faultless china in a high marqueterie chair, her feet upon a cushion of luxurious down. The appearance of the room is dazzling. The tone of society is a lavish and lazy luxury. Here comes Mrs. Candour with her fan and her scandalous stories ; Crabtree with his richly-embroidered coat ; Sir Benjamin Backbite, in pink silk, and with his mincing, macaroni airs, with his point-lace handkerchief, and his scented snuff ; and here amongst all this gaudiness, frivolity, and affectation, sits poor Maria, detesting the shallowness and affectation of the age in which she was born. Change the scene quickly to Lady Sneerwell's drawing-room at night, and contrast it by means of your ready sense of humour with the racing, romping drawing-room of 1874. The spinet and the powdered musicians are wheeled away to a corner. The room is bared of furniture and empty for a dance. Listen how the guests chatter and flatter one another, seated on rout-seats against the wall. They do not discuss the weather, or think anything "awfully jolly," or consider anyone "dreadfully much too nice," or tear round to the strains of a maddening

galop. . . . They take snuff with an air and bow with courtly gravity. They turn a verse or recite an epigram. Sir Benjamin Backbite is pestered for his latest folly, and Mrs. Candour is teased for her latest bit of scandal. But see, Lady Teazle enters, her train held by a negro page-boy, and all eyes are attracted by her diamonds, while all tongues are wagging about the young wife who has married an old bachelor. The music gives out the first bars of a glorious minuet, and tells us of the days when musicians wrote for dancing, and when dancing was an art. With consummate grace and delightful courtesy they commence a minuet. What a delicate affectation of refinement, what a meaning in every gesture and movement!

'We know not which most to admire, the refined orchestration or the studied courtesy of the polished dance. This is the drawing-room society of 1777. Change the scene again to an inner apartment at Sir Peter Teazle's. The semicircular shape of the room is seized as an opportunity for exhibiting some tapestry, which may have come from the manufactory of Sir Francis Crane, at Mortlake, in Surrey, may have been picked up in Flanders, or Bayeux, or Gobelins, dated in the reign of Louis Quatorze. A rare chandelier, suspended by a crimson silken cord, contrasts well with the carved-oak ceiling. A mandolin lies neglected on the floor, and the whole apartment is rich, heavy, and luxurious—the favourite apartment of a wealthy man of taste. Here Sir Peter welcomes his old friend "Noll;" here Lady Teazle, sitting on a low stool at his feet, pets and coaxes her testy and withal affectionate old husband. Once more we make a change. We are amongst bachelors, and dice-players, and winebibbers. We are in the extravagant home of Charles Surface, where his servant Trip borrows money by way of annuity, and the popular Charles himself sits at the head of a rollicking crew surrounded by the pictures of his ancestors. How they drink, and talk, and sing, and swear! How they empty the punch-bowl, carefully and continually replenished by the drawling Trip. Here, at the head of the table, sits Charles Surface in a costume whose colour can only be compared to that of a blue convolvulus ruined by the sun, his vest unbuttoned, his ruffles loosened, and his whole being abandoned to the gaiety of the moment. Moses and Premium are introduced, and mutually pleased and shocked. The family pictures are sold *coram populo*, without any necessity of retiring to another room. Some are smoking, some are snuffing, all are drinking, laughing, and making merry. All round are colour, richness, animation, and revelry. This, then, is the picture of bachelor life in 1777. Here are the wild oats sown. The scene is hushed and still when we come to the library of Joseph Surface. The picture is in wonderful contrast to the banquet at the home of his brother Charles. The furniture is massive, heavy and important. The bookcases are of oak, as black as ebony. The windows are of painted glass. The fireplace is as

carved and pillared as an old cathedral cope chest. The bindings of the books are of Russia leather, and there are ponderous tomes amongst them. The carpet is of thick pile, and from Turkey. The only contrast of colour in the room is found in the oriental blue vases on the mantel-shelf, in the blue delft dishes on the walls, in the polished brass of the coal-scuttle, in the gleam of the Venetian mirror, and the dull crimson of the all-important screen. These probably are the mere ideas sought to be conveyed to the audience by the beautiful pictures placed before them.'

The parts we ourselves played were so different from those rendered familiar to London playgoers by frequent repetitions of the Robertson comedies, and were treated in such an unconventional way, that we venture to add one brief comment by the same writer upon the performance of them :

'At last we obtain—at least in modern days—a Lady Teazle who is the fresh, genuine, impulsive country maiden wedded to an old bachelor, and not the practised actress, with all her airs and graces. How often in Lady Teazle the character is forgotten, the actress and the old business invariably remembered ! In the scandal scenes we were presented with an archness and sly sense of humour always evident but never superabundant, in which Mrs. Bancroft has a special patent ; in the coaxing scene with Sir Peter Teazle, the childlike desire to kiss and make friends, the almost kitten-like content when the reconciliation is made, and the expressive change of the countenance from sunshine to storm when the wrangle commences again, were admirably conveyed. But it was reserved for Mrs. Bancroft to make her most lasting impression in the screen scene. With wonderful care and welcome art the impression conveyed to an innocent mind by the insinuating deceit of Joseph was accurately shown by expression to the audience, though the excellence of the general idea culminated in what is known as Lady Teazle's defence, when the screen has fallen and the *denouement* has taken place. This was entirely new and thoroughly effective. The tones, alternating between indignation and pathos, between hatred of Joseph and pity for her husband's condition, were expressed with excellent effect. It was the frank and candid avowal of a once foolish but now repentant woman. The womanly instinct which bids Lady Teazle touch and try to kiss her husband's hand, the womanly weakness which makes Lady Teazle totter and trip as she makes for the door of the hated room, the womanly strength which steels Lady Teazle in her refusal of assistance from Joseph, and the woman's inevitable abandonment to hysterical grief *just before* the heroic goal is reached—were one and all instances of the treasured possession of an artistic temperament.

'The Joseph Surface of Mr. Bancroft, in that it is one of the most original and reflective performances, will attract most criticism

—will probably court the most objection. When Mr. Fechter played Iago, and discarded the hackneyed villain, there was a similar disturbance. According to stage tradition, Iago and Joseph Surface are such outrageous and obvious rascals that they would not be tolerated in any society. Mr. Bancroft reforms this altogether, and, by a subtlety and an ease most commendable, valuably strengthens his position as an actor, and his discrimination as an artist. Joseph Surface can be played as a low, cunning villain, or as a hungry, excited, and abandoned libertine. Mr. Bancroft adopts the golden mean. His deception is never on the surface, his libertinism is never for an instant repulsive. It is one of those instances of good acting which strike the beholder when the curtain is down and the play put away.'

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

All who witnessed our production of the *School for Scandal* will remember the black boy, a feature, among others, which we introduced into the comedy for the first time. It may be interesting to know the difficulty we had to find him, for we resolved that our Pompey should be a real one. The docks, workhouses, charitable institutions, and every likely place we could think of, were searched. It was not at all difficult to find a grown-up black, but our page was not to be more than ten years old. Their captains were under contract to take back to their native land those negroes who were on board ships in harbour, and, of course, dared not lend them. We were in despair, for it had been a pet notion of mine, and was to give the finishing-touch to this elaborate picture of the eighteenth century.

Grievously disappointed, I was on the point of giving up all hopes of finding my black boy, when one afternoon a gentleman was announced, who had been shown into the drawing-room accompanied by a true type of African beauty, dressed as a tiger. He was a perfect picture; very neat, and well pulled together, with spotless breeches, gloves, and collar, a face with large protruding lips, bright eyes, receding forehead, woolly hair, and a skin of a dark copper hue, which shone as if it had been polished, and looked like a well-coloured meerschaum pipe. I thought to myself, 'Pompey is discovered!'

The stranger introduced himself as an owner of sugar plantations in Africa, adding, that the boy, who was called 'Biafra,' after the ship he came over in, belonged to him, and having heard of my great desire to find a black page to appear in a play, if I would guarantee to return him to his master when I no longer required his services, he would lend this one to me with pleasure; only, I must undertake to keep him in the house, under my own care; the boy in return might make himself useful by helping to wait at table —but it was imperative that he must remain in our house. I was delighted with the proposal, and just at that moment my husband came in. The case was explained to him, and he readily agreed to

the conditions. I noticed that from the moment it was settled the boy should *pro tem.* belong to me, he came and stood close by my side, assuming at once that he was my personal property.

When his master had gone, I took Biafra to the other servants, and explained his presence amongst them. They took kindly to him as a novelty, and I very soon heard ripples of laughter, which assured me that he was a success in the kitchen. It was arranged that a second bed should be placed in the man-servant's room, who, as it happened, was out for a whole holiday; but being a good-tempered fellow, we felt certain he would not object.

My delight was beyond description, for the production of our play promised to be, at least, an artistic success. I related my adventure in the green-room that evening, and the company there were all highly pleased that after our hitherto vain search and anxiety I had succeeded at last.

On our return home we were informed that Biafra, being sleepy, had gone to bed early; but soon after midnight we were aroused by shouts and screams from the top of the house. Mr. Bancroft rushed upstairs, while I waited on the landing in a dressing-gown which I had hastily thrown on, wondering what could be the matter, for I heard a terrible scrimmage going on. By-and-by down came Mr. Bancroft, so convulsed with laughter that I could not get a word of explanation from him for some time: he sat on the stairs and positively became hysterical. At last he told me that our man-servant, having had permission to visit a relative out of town, had come home rather late, and as he had a latch-key lent to him, the other servants had gone to bed. It appears there was an inference of the man being somewhat unsteady after his relative's hospitality, so that on entering his room and seeing two beds, he no doubt made up his mind that he was either in the wrong house, or that he saw double. It turned out that he stood in the middle of the room, hoping gradually to get the vision of the two beds into proper focus; but finding the effort a failure, he approached one of them, and encountered, for the first time, Biafra. Paralyzed with terror, the poor fellow stood staring aghast at what he thought was the devil. Suddenly the boy opened his large black eyes, and rolled them wildly about, eventually fixing them on the new-comer, who gave a loud yell, which so terrified Biafra that he jumped out of bed. This intensified the situation, and the one screamed against the other until Mr. Bancroft discovered them. It took a considerable time to calm either of them—the boy was strange in the house, and only half awake; the other, being ignorant of the little nigger's arrival, thought the end of the world had come.

The next morning I took my black boy in triumph to the theatre, where he produced a great effect; he was instructed by me what to do in the business of the scenes he was to appear in. I found him intelligent and most obedient to everything *I* told him to do, but the instruction must all come from *me;* he would take no notice of

anyone else, not even of Mr. Bancroft. He always seemed to recognise the fact of having been handed over to me, and that he was in consequence my slave. If others happened to tell him to do the smallest thing, he would stand still and look at me, waiting for *my* orders. This became somewhat of a tax, because it was the same at home, and the servants found him difficult to manage downstairs. He helped to wait at table very fairly, but always stood at my elbow, with his big eyes fixed on mine, not looking at anyone else.

If a funny thing was said by anyone but me, he never smiled; but if I laughed he would at once laugh with me. Whenever he got into disgrace with the other servants, which was very often, I was called upon to scold him; and it was the only thing which had any effect. I could shake him, rebuke him, and threaten him, he would take it all from *me;* but if anyone else attempted to scold him, he would throw things at them, spit at them, and shout at them. It may be conceded, therefore, that he was, to say the least, an anxiety in the house; but so desirous was I for the completeness of our play, that I determined to endure the inconvenience at home for the sake of it. I consoled myself with the thought that when the piece was produced he would be more at the theatre, and the servants at home would be rid of him for the time. This fact seemed to reconcile them to his stopping in the house. The eventful night arrived, and all the appointments in the comedy were so exquisitely perfect in their beauty and correctness that I could not help feeling very proud. One seemed to be living in the last century, and when the curtain rose on the opening scene, we could hear the welcome murmurs of surprise and admiration everywhere. As the time drew near for my entrance as Lady Teazle, I felt very nervous. I knew that my dress was beautiful, white brocaded satin, profusely trimmed with old lace and pale blush-roses; powdered hair, dressed very high; a chaplet of roses and diamond ornaments, and Biafra to carry my long train. He looked a perfect picture in his laced scarlet coat and knee-breeches, his white turban and gilt dog-collar. He was indeed a magnificent contrast to my white gown, and when we entered, I was told the effect was charming. Biafra behaved most admirably; rarely stared at the mass of people in the theatre, but fixed his attention on me as usual. He followed me everywhere like a little dog, and obeyed my every look. Mr. Lewis Wingfield was so delighted with the boy's appearance, that he painted an admirable life-size head of him, which he most kindly presented to me.

While on the subject of our production of the *School for Scandal*, and before I end Biafra's adventures, I must tell of a little episode which so amused me at the time, that I venture to think it may be worth alluding to. In the tea scene, the stage was crowded with guests, and the musicians who accompanied the *minuet de la cour*. There was an old woman who was employed in the theatre to assist

in the cleaning department—the same old lady we have alluded to with reference to some early rehearsals of *Ours*. She was a poor, humble old thing, and, on account of her age, unable to work much; but we kept her about the place, letting her think herself useful, for her wages helped to support her little home. She had, although in this humble position, a very striking face and aristocratic features, being tall and thin, with perfectly white hair. It occurred to me one day while watching her with a duster in her hand, thinking, poor old soul, that she was very busy, but really doing nothing, that she would, if well dressed, make an effective figure among Lady Sneerwell's guests, and she certainly looked every inch a *grande dame* of the period in her deep red broché sac, trimmed with black Spanish point, her high powdered wig, her feathers and court patches, which really seemed to assist her already finely cut features; with these and her long Suède gloves, some handsome paste ornaments which I lent her, and large black fan, she presented a conspicuously handsome picture. The dear old lady was delighted with her fine clothes, and walked through the scene exactly as she had been instructed; of course she had nothing to say, that was impossible! But, when I walked amongst the guests to speak to them (*sotto voce*) I came across my old *protégée*, and it struck me at the moment to address her with particular respect, so I made a low curtsey, to which she intelligently responded, and, suiting the word to the action, I said, 'I hope your ladyship is well to-night?' To prove to me that she was equal to the occasion, the dear old thing replied, '*I'm nicely, thank yer, mum!*' This was heard by no one but me, *fortunately!*

But to return to our black boy, who was becoming more and more unpopular at home, for complaints came pouring in every day. The cook could not keep him from the sweets, and he was in constant hot water with the other servants; his appetite was enormous; he would get the potatoes and throw them about the kitchen, hide the housemaid's boots in the hot oven, and the manservant complained that 'he snored so loud he could get no sleep for him, and the more he threw things at his head, the louder he snored.'

One day he was sent into the stables with a message. He no sooner made his appearance there than the horses shied, the dogs barked, and the noise was so great that the coachman was obliged to turn him out. None of the animals ever took to him; the cats arched their backs, and with swollen tails would spit at him as he passed near them. My parrot, who is a splendid talker and perfectly tame, became silent in his presence, and simply meditated. In fact, the cook remarked, 'The 'ouse ain't the same 'ouse!'

Mr. Bancroft and I at last consulted whether it would not be advisable to take him on the box of the carriage when we drove out, and so relieve the kitchen-folk for the afternoon, which, with

his work at the theatre at night, would clear the house of him for the greater half of the day. A happy thought! but I shall never forget the coachman's face when Biafra appeared for the first time by his side. It was a study. We soon had to give up our brilliant idea, for a crowd of boys would collect and jeer if we pulled up, and, while we were driving, would often shout after the boy and give imitations of the sweeps, or cry out, 'Ere's a Christy Minstrel.' One day we stopped to make a purchase, and on leaving the shop were horrified at finding Biafra fighting on the pavement with three or four young street ruffians. He had jumped down to punish them for their insolence, and the scene was awful. We got him home, and I need not say that, greatly to the coachman's glee, he occupied the box no more. I soon found that he was making himself obnoxious at the theatre also, amongst the servants. He would spite them by playing all sorts of tricks. He would lie down in the darkened passages, and being black he could not be seen, consequently the unwary would tumble over him. I could always influence him while present, but the moment I went away he would misconduct himself again. It all became such an anxiety at last—what with the fear of losing our servants, and complaints pouring in from all quarters day and night—that we resolved to return Biafra to his master; so, after a seven weeks' run, our black friend was restored to his former and, perhaps, more congenial position. Just before his final exit, he thrust all the cook's caps up the chimney! The next time I required a black page was in *Masks and Faces*, but I contented myself with an imitation one. The genuine article had been too much for me.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

Our production of the *School for Scandal*, aided greatly, of course, by the increase to the prices of admission, proved a success of the first rank, and brought us many interesting letters: a few of them, from the eminence of their writers, we venture to quote. First among them is one which came almost immediately from Wilkie Colllins:

'90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square, *April* 6, 1874.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—I tried to call at Pleydell House yesterday, but the London distances—I was obliged to go first to South Kensington—were too much for me.

'The get-up of the piece is simply wonderful; I never before saw anything, within the space, so beautiful and so complete: but the splendid costumes and scenery did not live in my memory as Mrs. Bancroft's acting does. I don't know when I have seen anything so fine as her playing of the great scene with Joseph; the truth and beauty of it, the marvellous play of expression in her face, the quiet and beautiful dignity of her repentance, are beyond all praise.

'I cannot tell *you* or tell *her* how it delighted and affected me.

You, too, played admirably. The "key" was, perhaps, a little too low ; but the conception of the man's character I thought most excellent. I left my seat in a red-hot fever of enthusiasm. I have all sorts of things to say about the acting—which cannot be said here —when we next meet. I heartily congratulate you in the meantime.—Yours ever, WILKIE COLLINS.'

We next find in our collection the opinion of the veteran actor, William Creswick, whose training we fairly thought might rebel at our innovations :

'8, Bloomsbury Square, *June* 1, 1874.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—Accept my best thanks for your very kind and courteous note, also for a most interesting and pleasant evening's entertainment.

'Permit me likewise to congratulate Mrs. Bancroft and yourself upon a success so justly and honourably achieved. Your boldness, liberality, and taste in rearranging and mounting the play, instead of "offending my prejudices," most fully and thoroughly gratified them, more especially so, as I have ever thought that the revival of a great dramatic work should resemble the production of a grand book. The illustrations should be original, new, and more brilliant and appropriate than any upon the same subject that may have preceded it. The last edition should be the handsomest and the best, as it unquestionably is in this instance.

'It will be, I believe, a very long time before anyone will be so rash as to attempt another illustrated edition of the *School for Scandal.*

'Be so good as to present my best compliments and thanks to Mrs. Bancroft, and believe me, yours faithfully, WM. CRESWICK.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

A letter much appreciated by us from the distinguished Academician, Mr. Frith, will be welcomed by the reader, if only on the score of his recent great success in another walk of life ; for many to whom we hope our book may appeal must have been among those whom his charmingly-told reminiscences have recently delighted :

'7, Pembridge Villas, Bayswater, *July* 31, 1874.

'MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—You and all your people gave me and mine very great pleasure last night. I am afraid to say how many times I have seen the *School for Scandal*, and how many great actors and actresses I have seen in it. I won't say but that on some occasions one or two of the parts have been better filled ; but take your cast altogether, it is one that no other theatre could show, and the great play was rendered with high intelligence.

'Mrs. Bancroft was, as she always is, perfect. To me the minuet was one of the most delightful bits of grace and exquisite taste ever

seen. It took me back to the days of my great-grandmother, a hundred years ago.

'May your shadows never grow less!—Always faithfully yours, W. P. FRITH.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

We will only add a characteristic and appreciative letter from another stage veteran, Walter Lacy, who defies Time and still, as cheerily as ever, wakes the echoes of the Garrick Club, by his remarkable choice of words:

'38, Montpelier Square, Knightsbridge, *Thursday Night.*

'DEAR BANCROFT,—Some forty years since, Macready was announced to play "Richard the Third for the first time in London these eight years," and, although I had banqueted right royally on the grand Edmund Kean, I was not to be weaned from my old love. I thoroughly enjoyed the highly intellectual treat prepared for me by Mac's new reading; and so was it to-night in the classic little temple where I made my *début* in the *French Spy* with Celeste, shortly after seeing the new Richard at Drury Lane. As Macready carefully avoided every point made by Kean, much of the comedy to-night was made pathetic, and *vice versâ*, but, both in conception and finish of execution, evincing the common-sense, good taste, delicacy and refinement of yourself and our most natural actress, whose Lady Teazle had touches of unapproachable excellence. The brothers were equally admirable, and would perhaps have been even more so had they changed parts. Mr. Hare's screen-scene was worthy of his reputation, and nothing could surpass the Lady Sneerwell. The "picture"-scene is distinctly an advance upon the old arrangement, but I doubt if the guests, except Careless, should return; they confused the scene, I thought, and turned it into a public auction instead of a private sale.

'In haste, with kindest regards and thanks for a great treat.—Faithfully yours, WALTER LACY.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

I am sure, on the score of our long acquaintance, my old friend will forgive me for endeavouring to amuse the reader as his language amused me, by repeating his extraordinary account of the effort of an aspiring tragedian in the great scene between Shylock and Tubal. In the situation where the Jew learns how his daughter parted with the ring which he would not have sold for 'a wilderness of monkeys,' Walter Lacy described the actor in these words:

'At this point, sir, he leapt three feet into the air, and then gave a cry like the skreel of a banished eagle!' Speaking of some of his own performances, he thus related his different methods of dining: 'When I played "Bluff Hal," sir (Henry of England), I

drank brown porter and dined off British beef; but if I had to act the Honourable Tom Shuffleton, I contented myself with a delicate cutlet and a glass of port which resembled a crushed garnet, and then sallied on to the stage with the manners of a gentleman and the devil-me-care air of a man about town!'

Apropos of Walter Lacy's letter, I must venture to dispute his judgment in suggesting that I might with advantage have exchanged parts with Coghlan, whose splendid acting as Charles Surface was so greatly praised by all the critics, and by all judges of our art; while sharing to the fullest extent this admiration for his performance, I would yet venture to wonder if, in its beautiful finish, the character was not in his hands somewhat more suggestive of a dissolute young French *Marquis*, than of a reckless and boisterous young Englishman.

At this time Mr. Bellew, who had long been seriously ill, seeming, in fact, to slowly fade away after his return from a long tour in America, where he went to give his readings, was living quite close to our house in the Grove End Road, and very often one or both of us would sit with him and try to help some sad half-hours away. He was especially interested in our performance of the *School for Scandal*, hoping for an early visit to it, which was never destined to take place. We can only conclude that one of our visits must have been overdue, for not many days before his death he wrote this note of gentle reproach:

'*Friday, May* 29, 1874.

'My dear Bancroft,—England is my nation, London is my dwelling place, 16, Circus Road is my location, and Bellew my nomination.

'As you won't come and see me, I write to inquire how you are.—Yours very truly, J. M. Bellew.'

In June he passed quietly away, and we saw him laid to rest in the Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green. When he was still a clergyman of the Church of England (before he became a public reader and reciter), I very frequently heard him preach; for he was a man of great oratorical and highly cultivated gifts; doubtless owing something of his pulpit popularity to his grand voice, his beautiful hair, and *soigné* appearance; his reading of the 'death chapter' from the Burial Service being especially impressive and powerful. On one occasion—the last day of the year 1865, I remember—I went to his chapel in Bloomsbury, which was always crowded, to hear his midnight sermon, in which he made reference to some of the great men whom the world had lost during the expiring year, including, I recollect quite well, Lord Palmerston, President Lincoln, and Cardinal Wiseman. When Bellew mentioned the last name, it was received by some foolish bigot among the congregation with a distinct and pronounced hiss—a strange sound to hear in a sacred building. Bellew paused, evidently

amazed at the interruption, and then proceeded, amidst perfect stillness, with his panegyric to the memory of a deservedly remarkable man.

I will repeat a little story which Bellew told us of a neighbour of his, who for years wore one of the most palpable of wigs, being at the same time quite convinced in his own mind that no one shared the mysterious secret; for he even went so far with the evident deception as to have several wigs which he wore in turn, the hair of each of them being of different lengths. Bellew one morning met his friend just as he was leaving his house, and asked if they could walk together. 'Delighted,' said the owner of the coffee-coloured 'jasey,' 'if you are going towards Bond Street, where I must stop to *have my hair cut*.'

Poor Bellew! he was much regretted by all who really knew him, and by those whom he took the least pains to teach the way to like him. We are glad to believe that we were of them.

To return to stage matters, I hope the reader has not followed us so far in our book without believing that successful management has to work very far ahead—one of its greatest strains. 'Sufficient for the day,' etc., is a proverb of no use to its followers—'The early bird' being much more suitable as a theatrical motto. Guided by this principle, we were still only in the early days which followed the performance of the *School for Scandal*, when we decided that a revival of *Society*, conjointly with the production of Mr. Gilbert's 'dramatic contrast,' should form our next programme, which we anticipated would be required in the autumn. We wished, however, at once to settle what should follow even that, for persistent attacks of hay-fever had so distressed and pained Mrs. Bancroft for the last few summers, that it became desirable to arrange a programme without her, for the time of year which proved so trying to her health. This was no easy task, and led me naturally to try and think of some attractive substitute. As I have before asserted that I was mainly responsible for the choice of plays during our management, let me at once admit that a variety of circumstances led my wandering thoughts—amazing as the revelation seemed to be when subsequently made public—towards Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. This fact I allude to now, for it will be more fully dwelt on later, to show how far our work was always in advance, and that no success, however great, of the moment blinded us to this necessity. Our failures received the same amount of careful forethought as did our triumphs.

Faithful to our rule not to forego our holiday, we refused some splendid offers to take our version of the *School for Scandal*, with all its paraphernalia, to the leading provincial cities; while the three thousand miles of sea remained, unhappily, an insurmountable obstacle to the consideration of brilliant proposals from America with the same object, so that we broke the run of the old comedy on August 7th, after having played it to more than a

hundred full houses, and went away to Switzerland *viâ* Ostend. We stayed some little time at the Kaltbad Hotel, above the Lake of Lucerne. Among our companions there this year were Arthur Cecil, and Palgrave Simpson, who dearly loved the place, and spent many summers there. Our ultimate object was to get on to Venice, where we had arranged to meet our scenic artist at the beginning of September, to see what nooks and spots we best could choose for our proposed bold attempt to place the *Merchant of Venice* upon our little stage. I remember there were enough friends of J. L. Toole in this mountain hotel (but where would there not be?) to send him a round-robin telegram to wish him 'good luck' on the day of his first appearance in America. We drove in two days over the St. Gothard Pass to Bellinzona, and thence, still by carriage, for there was no railway then, to Lugano, where the inn we stayed at had evidently once been a convent; next, partly by steamer, then by road, to Menaggio, on the Lake of Como, rowing on to Cadenabbia, where we stayed some days. The first impression of the Italian lakes, in perfect weather, is one not easily effaced; and even on the most prosaic mind of this most prosaic nineteenth century must have its effect. With many a sigh we left this earthly paradise, for a short rest of a day and a half at Milan: hurried glimpses at its marble cathedral, the old church of S. Ambrogio, the Scala, and the many beauties of the city, were all that we could spare time to snatch as we hastened to our destination.

We arrived at Venice on a lovely evening, in the great heat of early September days, and our journey to Danieli's was the first experience of that strange city, perhaps of all places the least disappointing to the imagination. Our brief and busy visit would not allow us to attempt a description in any proper terms of the peerless beauty of this wondrous city. The powerful pen of Ruskin may have shattered the romance formerly attached to the 'Bridge of Sighs,' and reduced the stories of its dungeons and their inmates to a sort of sentimental fraud, on a par, perhaps, with the tale of William Tell and the apple, or of King Alfred and the cakes. What if the existing Rialto could have nothing in common with old Shylock and the merchant princes of those days! What if the house shown to tourists as being once the abode of Othello, in which (poor fool!) he smothered dear Desdemona, is but another of the many selfsame poetic swindles! There remains more than enough reality to dwell upon and think about. A kind of spell seems to be wound about any but the most unromantic traveller who has the luck to arrive when the moon is full, and, having escaped from the *facchini* at the quay, is taken, instead of by a wretched 'growler' or hotel omnibus, in a gondola to his hotel, listening in silence, while he glides along, to the splash of the oar and the musical warning-cry from the boatman as he approaches corners on the way.

There, as arranged, we met George Gordon, our scene-painter, whom we found brimful of the delights his few days' stay had given

him. Every hour seemed occupied in settling to what purpose we best could put it, and very carefully we chose the spots we felt would make good pictures for our narrow frame. In the Doges' Palace we saw plainly that the Sala della Bussola was the only one within our means to realize, and this room we decided should be accurately reproduced for the trial of Antonio and Portia's pleading on his behalf. We resolved to show different views of Venice in the form of curtains between the acts of the play, and, when all was settled (after delightful days and evenings spent in seeing what we could in the time at our disposal), we went away, leaving George Gordon to complete his sketches, only too happy to linger in its congenial atmosphere.

To tell the truth, we suffered greatly from mosquitoes, and found the pastile remedy almost as trying, through going to Venice so early in September; but those troubles soon passed, leaving us permanent and delightful memories of the Piazzo San Marco, where, of course, we fed the friendly pigeons; of the grand cathedral church, with its wondrous mosaics and its bronze horses; the Campanile, with its view that tells you of the possibility of getting from quarter to quarter of the city without once entering a gondola; the Palace of the Doges, so grandly entered by its Giant Stairs, with its superb Titians and Paul Veroneses; the distant Lido (where a horse looked almost strange), and its lovely bathing in the Adriatic. We can only say, *A bientôt.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEASON OF 1874-75.

An odd story of mistaken identity — House-hunting — *School for Scandal* withdrawn — John Hare's secession from the company — Production of *Sweethearts* — Mrs. Charles Kean on Mrs. Bancroft's Jenny Northcott — Revival of *Society* — Death of Tom Hood — Recollections — Royalty in the green-room — Preparations for the *Merchant of Venice* — Engagement of Miss Ellen Terry for Portia — Mrs. Bancroft and the nigger — *Sweethearts* and *Society* withdrawn, and the *Merchant of Venice* produced — A failure to be proud of — The part of Shylock — Letter from G. A. Sala — *Money* in rehearsal again — The *première* of *Our Boys* — Signor Salvini — His performance of Othello before the actors of London — G. H. Lewes on his death-scene in *Hamlet* — A letter from him — Reproduction of *Money*, and its effect — A morning performance with a small programme — Holiday abroad: the missing box — A persistent snorer — The Duke of Connaught — A mountain storm — A lucky meeting with Mr. Critchett.

COMMENCED BY MR. BANCROFT.

It was at this time that a strange circumstance occurred which I afterwards related at the request of an old friend, and which appeared in a Christmas annual in 1879, under the title of 'Our Doubles.' I will repeat so much of the odd story as happened at this particular time.

Soon after we had recommenced work at the little theatre, after our holiday abroad, I received a letter from a debt-collector living in Camden Town, stating that he was instructed by Mr. ———, the proprietor of the ——— Hotel, and also of some livery stables, at Ventnor, to apply to me for immediate payment of an account for the hire of carriages and horses in the previous September, while staying at the said hotel and left unpaid when I went away. Having passed the whole of my holiday in Switzerland and Venice, and never having been in Ventnor in my life, I was a little puzzled by this application. At first I thought it must be a practical joke, but eventually, after a further request for payment, I answered the letter—rather angrily, I think—pointing out the mistake which had been made, and stating my real whereabouts at the time I was charged with driving about the Isle of Wight.

From the debt-collector I heard no more; but one evening, a few weeks later, when I had arrived at the theatre and was reading some letters before dressing for the stage, the hall-porter knocked at the door of my room, said that a gentleman wanted to see me, and handed me a card.

My surprise may be imagined when I read that my visitor was the proprietor of the ——— Hotel, Ventnor. I at once told the hall-keeper to show him into the green-room, which, so early in the evening, was unoccupied, and in a few minutes I went downstairs.

'Good-evening.' 'Good-evening, sir.' 'You have asked to see me. I am Mr. Bancroft.' 'So I see, sir,' said 'mine host' cheerfully, and with a decidedly provincial accent.

I looked at him well. His face was frank and honest, and his manner self-possessed.

'You have applied to me,' I next said, 'for money you say I owe you?' 'Yes, sir; the amount remained unpaid when you left my hotel in September.' 'When I left your hotel! Do you mean to assert that my appearance has not at once convinced you there must be some mistake?' 'Not on my side, I think, sir.' 'Do you mean to say,' I still asked, fairly amazed, 'that you believe you recognise in me the person who owes you this money?' 'I see no difference,' was the immediate reply, 'except that he had a moustache.'

At this time, and throughout my holiday, my face was clean-shaven, for I was acting the part of 'Joseph Surface.'

'Tell me something more of this,' I said; 'for your manner, at any rate, convinces me of your honesty.' 'I thank you, sir,' replied my visitor; 'and but for your straightforward denial, I would have sworn in any witness-box that you were the person who, with a lady, passed at my house for nearly a month as Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Prince of Wales's Theatre.'

Here, I thought, was my chance of convincing the man he had been imposed upon. I turned up the gas directly under a large photograph of my wife, and said, 'That is a portrait of Mrs. Bancroft.'

My visitor rose, looked at it well, then said, 'Yes, and a very good likeness it is, sir !'

I was nearly paralyzed with amazement, and hardly remember what passed next ; but I feel certain that the landlord, although his eyesight was throughout the interview my enemy, became as impressed by the honesty of my repudiation as I was by the frankness of his assertions.

I learnt that our doubles had lived for a month on the best his house afforded, that at the end of their stay there was a little difficulty about the bill ; they said they could not pay then, but would send the money from London, as the theatre was about to reopen (a statement which agreed with the newspaper advertisements), and that they must go.

To this proposal 'mine host' naturally objected. Eventually the man was allowed to depart alone, leaving the lady with her luggage to be redeemed. The money for the hotel bill, it seems, was sent in a few days, and the hostage released ; the claim sent into me being for carriage and horse hire which had been overlooked at the time, the livery-stable business being separate from that of the hotel.

When, at last, my visitor went away, he left, I feel assured, full of conflicting emotions, hardly knowing which of his senses he best could trust.

We neither of us to our knowledge have ever seen either of these people, and can give no opinion of this apparently singular likeness—all the more remarkable as it applied to two people. Sometimes I have wondered if the lady could have been the person of whom Mrs. Bancroft writes in an earlier chapter. One day, shortly before the interview I have related, and prior to the re-opening of the theatre, I was asked by Meredith Ball, our musical conductor, how I liked a new play which had just been produced at the Criterion Theatre. To my answer that I had not seen it yet, he seemed greatly surprised, and exclaimed, 'Not seen it ! why, weren't you there last night ?' 'Last night,' I replied ; 'certainly not. I have only just returned to England ; in fact, reached Charing Cross last evening.' 'That's very extraordinary,' said Ball. 'One of the band, who has been with me for years, and has been filling up the vacation by playing in the orchestra at the Criterion, told me just now that he saw you and Mrs. Bancroft there last evening in a private box.' Afterwards this friendly musician, who of course knew us both quite well, could hardly be convinced of his error. Later on two young friends of ours wrote home from Italy—either from Rome or Florence—to say, after expressing their surprise at our being abroad at that time of year, 'that we had both cut them dead twice on the same day, first in the street, then at a theatre ;' while reference to an English newspaper would have told them that we were playing in *Caste* every night.

At a large party given by Irving, I remember one of his guests, who kindly offered to be of any service in the matter if he could,

telling me that he had read my little story in the Christmas number, and that he could support the truth of it, so far as that he had passed some weeks at the Isle of Wight hotel just after 'Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft,' as they were called through this 'uncanny' resemblance, had left, and was quite under the impression that we had been staying there. To conclude, only recently I was reproached by the celebrated novelist, James Payn, with having ignored his salutations in the King's Road, Brighton, where at the time I had not been for at least a year, as he was amazed to hear—his conviction that he was bowing to me without receiving a response being confirmed by Mrs. Payn, who was by his side at the time.

What further mischief has been done I cannot say, and it is impossible to foretell the sequel, should there ever be one. How many forms this incident might take! Some day, perhaps, we may hear strange disclosures of other personations; or *we*, perhaps, may be the recipients of legacies or of gifts meant for *them*—who knows!

Although the receipts continued excellent at the resumed run of the *School for Scandal* until the comedy was withdrawn, they never again approached the great average of the first hundred performances. Indeed, so far as my experience goes—excepting of course very special plays which may have attained an extraordinary hold upon the public—the main result of most successful theatrical productions is achieved in about the first hundred nights, and certainly the first fifty audiences are the most delightful to act before, being formed as a rule of keen play-goers.

We were now hard at work, immediately upon the forthcoming second revival of *Society*, and the production of W. S. Gilbert's charming two-act play, which I was so fortunate, when we were all at our wits' end for a title, as to christen *Sweethearts;* the *White Willow*, *Doctor Time*, *Thirty Years*, *Spring and Autumn*, being among the many suggested names which my inspiration was thought to beat. But, of course, throughout all this while the *Merchant of Venice* sat by no means lightly on our minds, especially upon mine, which was responsible for the reckless idea. We also were house-hunting, having resolved to go and live in town and be nearer to our work. It was not without a pang that we abandoned our garden with its beautiful trees; or the close proximity to Lord's, where for years I saw all the great M.C.C. matches; but during our frequent rehearsals we found that four journeys to and fro between home and theatre alone took up a great deal of our time. In the autumn, after many a fruitless search, we saw a moderate-sized house—which gave me, what I have always loved, the sight, if not the possession, of trees—in Cavendish Square. We made a bid for it, which was accepted, although, from the state in which we found the place, we knew it would be at least three months before we should be able to occupy it.

It was at this time that our company suffered a great loss in the

departure of its oldest and most valued member, John Hare. Wisely enough, for there was ample room for two such theatres as the then Prince of Wales's in friendly rivalry, he had for some time entertained ideas of commencing management on his own account; how wisely has been proved by the splendid record of his work in that direction.

When the *School for Scandal* was withdrawn, Hare left us, Sir Peter Teazle being the last part he played under our management; but time has not weakened our remembrance of his valued services, and the great aid he gave to the Robertson comedies—with which his name must always be associated—or, I rejoice to add, altered our friendship. He and I had dressed in the same room together for years—those years being, at least on my part, the happiest of life—for they began when I was twenty-four, and ended when I was thirty-three. I know I can claim to be his oldest theatrical friend, and I don't suppose that he was surprised that the little dressing-room knew me no more, for the next night I found a lonely corner somewhere else.

The new programme proved a great hit, and no play of its length, perhaps, ever excited more attention than *Sweethearts*, which was announced as follows: On Saturday, November 7th, 1874, will be acted, for the first time, *Sweethearts:* an original dramatic contrast, written by W. S. Gilbert. Act I.—Spring: 1844. Harry Spreadbrow, Mr. Coghlan; Wilcox, Mr. F. Glover; Jenny Northcott, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft). Act II.—Autumn: 1874. Sir Henry Spreadbrow, Mr. Coghlan; Miss Northcott, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft); Ruth, Miss Plowden.

Many curious and touching letters were addressed to Mrs. Bancroft, impelled by the emotions the play and her acting caused the writers of them; but the following kind note, addressed to her by a former leader of our profession so distinguished as Mrs. Charles Kean, gave her especial pleasure.

'47, Queensborough Terrace, Kensington Gardens,
March 28, 1875.

'DEAR MADAM,—I have been so long ill that I have seen nothing of what has been going on in the theatrical world; but I had a great desire to see you in *Sweethearts*, and did so on Saturday. Allow me now to thank you much for the enjoyment you afforded me by your charming acting as Jenny Northcott.

'Perhaps it may not be unpleasing to know that a very old actress thought it perfection. Your style is all your own, and touchingly true to nature.

'Again thanking you, believe me, truly yours, ELLEN KEAN.'

I remember during the second act, early in the run of the little play, a gentleman who occupied a stall close to the stage being so palpably unable to control his emotion that he attracted the attention of his neighbour—a lady—so markedly, that at last he turned

to her and exclaimed quite audibly, 'Yes, ma'am, I *am* crying, and I'm proud of it!'

The cast of *Society* had undergone many changes since we first acted it; the principal characters being played as follows:

Lord Ptarmigant, Mr. Archer; Sidney Daryl, Mr. Coghlan; Mr. John Chodd, sen., Mr. Arthur Wood; Mr. John Chodd, jun., Mr. F. Glover; Tom Stylus, Mr. Bancroft; Olinthus O'Sullivan, Mr. Collette; Lady Ptarmigant, Mrs. Leigh Murray, and Maud Hetherington, Miss Fanny Josephs.

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

We lost a friend of long standing at this time, in the death of Tom Hood on November 20th, before he was quite forty years of age. I first met him at the house of my brother-in-law, Mr. Fletcher, they having been college chums at Oxford, and it was afterwards, at his own table, that we made the acquaintance of Mr. Clement Scott, who was then a very young man, known to his intimates and his friends in the War Office as 'Kitten,' and who we little thought in future years would sit in judgment on much of our managerial work, trying, we are glad to say, never to allow his friendship to sway his opinion, for his adverse views on some of our productions are as severe as any that have been written of us.

Clever and kindly Tom Hood, not long before he died, gave me a bound copy of that droll yet sympathetic nursery story, written by his distinguished father the poet and wit, entitled 'The Headlong Career and Woeful Ending of Precocious Piggy.' Tom Hood often told me how, as a little boy, he had enjoyed the comical history, when it was related to him by his father, who had written it especially for the amusement of his children, and who were all, more or less, deeply interested in Piggy's adventures. I have drawn many a laugh and many a tear from the little ones to whom I have read the story, and my copy, a gift from the son, who so cleverly illustrated his father's quaint fancy, is much prized by me. Before presenting me with the book, Tom Hood added a pen-and-ink drawing which represents 'Piggy' in evening dress, with crush hat, gloves, and opera-glasses complete. Piggy looks remarkably funny, and one cannot resist laughing heartily at the cleverness of the sketch. Tom Hood also added the following verse to the illustration:

'"Where are you going to, you little pig?"
"To the New Prince of Wales's, dressed out in full fig."
"In full fig, young pig?
A pig in full fig!
You'll see Marie Wilton, you lucky young pig!"'

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

On Monday, November 23rd, the performance was honoured by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Cesarewwitch, now Emperor of Russia, to whom the Prince of Wales presented me; the Grand Duke Alexis, his brother;

and Prince Louis of Battenberg. I only mention the circumstance, as I doubt if any little green-room ever received so large a contingent of royalty at the same time.

Now that these plays were so successfully launched, I turned all my thoughts towards the *Merchant of Venice;* the first attempt we made towards special engagements being a proposal to Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, which broke down, when, happily, the thought of Ellen Terry, who then had not acted for a considerable time, came to me, and resulted in her engagement to be the Portia. The following characteristic letter from that delightful actress, whose method so completely conveys the power of 'charm,' will be the best comment on the subject we can offer, and, I am sure, the most acceptable to the reader :

'DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,—I received the form of engagement this morning, together with the kind little letters. Accept my best thanks for your expressions of good-will towards me. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that I seem to see in you a reflection of my own feelings with regard to this engagement.

'My work will, I feel certain, be *joyful* work, and joyful work *should* turn out *good* work. *You* will be pleased, and *I* shall be pleased at your pleasure, and it would be hard, then, if the good folk "in front" are not pleased.—Believe me, I am *all ways*, sincerely yours, ELLEN TERRY.'

I took upon myself the great responsibility of rearranging the text of the play, so as to avoid change of scene in sight of the audience, and adapt the work, as far as possible, to its miniature frame ; being greatly fortified in my researches by the discovery of the following passage, which I came across in an old edition of the play that had been my father's, and which I had often read when a boy, for the *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* were always my favourites of Shakespeare's plays :

'The old quarto editions of 1600 have no distribution of acts, but proceed from the beginning to the end in an unbroken tenour. This play, therefore, having been probably divided without authority by the publishers of the first folio, lies open to a new regulation, if any more commodious division can be proposed. The story in itself is so wildly incredible, and the changes of the scene so frequent and capricious, that the probability of action does not deserve much care.—JOHNSON.'

Here was a discovery, indeed, in so eminent an opinion, and I resolved to include the first paragraphs of it in our play-bill. Perhaps there will be no better opportunity to describe the sequence of scenes I eventually decided on, for I often have regretted that I did not print the play as we performed it. The first tableau, under

the arches of the Doge's palace, contained the text of the opening and third scenes of Act I., the dialogue being welded together by carefully arranged and appropriate pantomimic action from the crowds, who were throughout passing and re-passing. The second tableau was in Portia's house at Belmont, and opened with the choice of the golden casket by the Prince of Morocco, after which came the dialogues between Portia and Nerissa from Act I., scene 2, and then closed with the announcement of the Prince of Arragon, and his choice of the silver casket. In the third tableau we return to Venice, a most quaint spot of the old city being chosen for the outside of Shylock's house, which, without exception, was the most extraordinary scenic achievement in so small a theatre, the close of the scene being the elopement by moonlight of his daughter. This tableau was then repeated by daylight for the scene of 'the Jew's rage' with Solanio and Salarino, and his subsequent interview with Tubal. The fourth view was a repetition, with some changed effects; it being the hall of Portia's palace, where Bassanio chose wisely from the three caskets, and heard afterwards of Antonio's arrest. The next tableau was the 'Trial Scene,' and the last, 'Portia's Garden.'

The words of two or three songs from some of his other comedies were introduced, but no syllable of Shakespeare's text was altered; transpositions of the dialogue alone being necessary for an arrangement of the play which it may not be too late, even yet, to publish. This arrangement of the incidents of the play was subsequently highly praised by Dutton Cook.

Sketches from Vicellio were made by Mr. Coghlan for some of the dresses, and to him not only the responsibility of acting Shylock but the stage management of the production were intrusted. Mr. E. W. Godwin lent his valuable archæological knowledge, and all possible pains were bestowed upon every branch of the work by all concerned; some charming music was especially composed by Mr. Meredith Ball, the voice portions being rendered by a choir of men and boys specially trained, who, with the soldiers engaged to represent the Prince of Morocco's suite and the Doge's body-guard, to say nothing of the increased company, tried our resources to the utmost with regard to dressing-room accommodation. The views of Venice—comprising the Campanile and column of St. Mark, the Rialto, and a view of the Grand Canal, to be shown between the acts—were beautiful pictures by George Gordon, who, with Mr. Harford, devoted months of labour to the scenery, which was very realistic; elaborate capitals of enormous weight, absolute reproductions of those which crown the pillars of the colonnade of the Doge's Palace, were cast in plaster, causing part of a wall to be cut away to find room for them to be moved, by means of trucks, on and off the tiny stage. Special engagements, of course, were made in order to complete the long cast of the play. For my own part, I decided upon only adding a minor character to my other labours,

as my brain was kept at such a tension that I wanted some relief from it; whether the play was to succeed or fail began to seem as nothing to the longing to be rid of it.

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

I must here interrupt Mr. Bancroft's narrative to tell a true, and, I hope, amusing incident. While waiting one day in Wellington Street in an open carriage for my husband, who was giving some orders at Madame Auguste's about the dresses, I was startled by a street-nigger coming towards me with a broad grin upon his black face. Concluding that he intended asking for money, I was preparing to give him something, when he stopped me by saying, 'No, no, lady; I don't come a-beggin'! I saw your kind face from the other side of the road, and when you smoiled, I said to myself, "Why, I know who that is; there ain't another smoile like that *no*wheres. It's Miss Ma-arie Wilton, wot was at the Strand Theayter!"' Seeing a wild stare of amazement on my face, he continued, 'Oh, you don't remember me, miss?' How in the world could I recognise the creature with such a face—all niggers have such a strong family likeness! I wished the ground to open and let me through; my sable friend, however, did not observe my agitation, and proceeded, 'I was in the chorus at the Strand Theayter, miss, when you was theer. Lor, how I used to watch you! I was up to my ears in love with you, miss!' *Such ears!* I wanted to scream! There I was, fixed in the carriage, and this man standing close to it, with one foot on the step. He continued, 'Since then I've tried many things, but failed in *heverythink!* If I had been hedgicated, I might 'ave been in a leadin' persition like 'Enery Irving at the Lyceum, there. But 'ere I am reduced to doin' nigger business in the streets like this 'ere!' I gazed at him with horror. A tall, white hat, with a deep black band; red and white striped trousers, very short; a coat with the tails dragging on the ground; a large white collar, and a tie like a windmill, which every time he moved threatened to knock my bonnet off; a handkerchief, the size of a moderate table-cover, hanging from his pocket, and a large flower in his coat like an 'ornament for your fire-stove.' At last strains of 'Ada with the Golden Hair' struck up close by, and with a sigh the nigger said, 'Well, miss, dooty calls, and I must go.' How thankful I was to dooty! 'My pals is in the next street. If ever I see you agin, I shall only take my 'at off to you, and you won't mind that, I know, from a poor fellar wot is down in the world!' This touched me, and I made him accept some money; the poor fellow then said, 'I 'umbly ask yer pardon, but I couldn't 'elp speakin' jist a word to you, for the sake of times gone by; good luck to you, miss, and God bless you!' This last sentence was spoken with pathos, and tears trickled down his cheeks, putting his face into half-mourning.

A few minutes later, as I was relating this experience to Mr.

Bancroft, we encountered a nigger troupe in a street off the Strand, and there was my black dose vigorously playing the bones; he kept his word, but as he raised his hat he fixed his eyes plaintively on me as he sang in chorus with 'his pals':

> 'I fancy I can see her now,
> Down at Farmer Fenn's,
> A pickin' up the new-laid eggs from the cow,
> And milkin' the cocks and hens.'

RESUMED BY MR. BANCROFT.

Meanwhile, the programme of *Sweethearts* and *Society* had succeeded beyond our hopes; indeed, both pieces might have been acted longer than they were, but on Tuesday, April 13th, we withdrew them, after one hundred and thirty-one performances, and the three following evenings were devoted to night rehearsals of the *Merchant of Venice*. On the last of them we decided, after all the excitement of it, to walk home, for our new house was but a short distance. As we passed the Middlesex Hospital, I remember the clock told us it was past three; in fact, we had been nine hours in the theatre.

Exquisite as we could see the Portia would be—beautiful, beyond our hopes, as were the scenery and dresses—we felt, alas! that the version of Shylock which Coghlan proposed to offer would fail, at the time, at any rate, to be acceptable; so it may be believed our hearts were heavy when the curtain rose upon the venture.

On Saturday, April 17th, 1875, will be acted, Shakespeare's Play, *The Merchant of Venice*. 'The old quarto editions of 1600 have no distribution of acts, but proceed from the beginning to the end in an unbroken tenour. This play, therefore, having been probably divided without authority by the publishers of the first folio, lies open to a new regulation, if any more commodious division can be proposed.'—*Johnson*. To avoid the changing of scenes in sight of the audience, the text (for the arrangement of which Mr. Bancroft is responsible) will be comprised in seven scenes, painted by Mr. Gordon and Mr. Harford, from drawings expressly made in Venice by Mr. Gordon, who desires to acknowledge his obligation to Mr. E. W. Godwin, F.S.A., for valuable aid in archæological research. Scene 1.—Under the Arches of the Doge's Palace. Scene 2.—Belmont. Scene 3.—Lanes in Venice: Morning. Scene 4.—Lanes in Venice: Evening. Scene 5.—Belmont. Scene 6.—The Sala Della Bussola. Scene 7.—A Garden. During the intervals between the scenes, views of Venice, painted by Mr. Gordon, will be shown. Duke of Venice, Mr. Collette; Prince of Morocco, Mr. Bancroft; Prince of Arragon, Mr. Vaughan; Antonio, Mr. Archer; Bassanio, Mr. E. H. Brooke (his first appearance); Solanio, Mr. Denison; Salarino, Mr. Teesdale; Gratiano, Mr. Lin Rayne; Lorenzo, Mr. Standing; Shylock, Mr. Coghlan; Tubal, Mr. Newton; Old Gobbo, Mr. F. Glover; Launcelot Gobbo, Mr. Arthur Wood; Leonardo, Mr. Robinson; Balthazar, Mr. Franks; Grand Captain,

Mr. Stewart ; Crier, Mr. Noel ; Gaoler, Mr. Eella ; Portia, Miss Ellen Terry (her first appearance) ; Nerissa, Miss Carlotta Addison ; Jessica, Miss Augusta Wilton. The incidenal music composed by Mr. J. Meredith Ball.

Of course, there was a brilliant audience, and the play throughout was well received, but never with enthusiasm. I think surprise had much to do with this ; it all looked so unlike a theatre, and so much more like old Italian pictures than anything that had been previously shown upon the stage. Some of the dresses seemed to puzzle many among the audience, notably those worn by Bassanio and the Venetian nobles, who accompanied him to Belmont in their velvet robes of state ; the gorgeous attendants on the Prince of Morocco ; and the Spaniards who accompanied the Prince of Arragon.

It may be that it all came a little before the proper time, and that we saw things too far in advance ; for the play, in our own opinions, only just missed being a great success. For my part, I account it a failure to be proud of ; nor should it be forgotten that the absence of Mrs. Bancroft was another serious drawback to its attraction, for Miss Terry had still, in those days, to earn the brilliant position she now owns, and of which her acting in this production was, without doubt, the foundation-stone. As I, and I alone was, responsible for the mistake, if, in truth, it was a mistake, in casting Mr. Coghlan for the part of Shylock (misled by his splendid acting in *Man and Wife*, and a play by the late regretted Sir Charles Young, called *Shadows*), I held it to be but right to stand by him, and so turned a deaf ear to the suggestions that poured in on every side as to what we ought to do, and was dumb to the remarkable applications from decayed tragedians—the names even of many of them being unknown to me before—who vowed that if the part were but given over to them the fortune of the production would still be assured.

Perhaps there is no character more trying than Shylock for an actor to excel in, especially in the scene where he upbraids Solanio and Salarino, and in the tremendous interview that follows between Tubal and himself. The fact of rushing on the stage in a white-heat frenzy, with nothing to lead up to its passion, I take it, is the main difficulty. Of all the Shylocks I have seen, Charles Kean did most with this particular scene, and his performance, I have been told, was, as far as he could make it so, a reproduction of his father's. Apropos of which, Mr. Wilton often spoke to me ; he having once, when quite a young actor, played Tubal to the Shylock of Edmund Kean. The great actor did not appear at rehearsal, but sent word that 'he should like to see the gentleman who was to be the Tubal at his hotel.' Mr. Wilton obeyed the summons, and spoke always of the kindness with which Kean instructed him, after saying, 'We'll run through the scene, Mr. Wilton, because I'm told that if you don't know what I'm going to do I might frighten you!' Mr.

Wilton described the performance as *stupendous!* and said that, although prepared beforehand, at night Kean really frightened him.

Macready writes of the difficulties of the part, and of his dissatisfaction with all his attempts to act it. It is said of him, and I believe with greater truth than attaches itself to all theatrical anecdotes, that he never went on the stage for the scene in question without hanging on to the rungs of a ladder, and trying to lash himself into the required condition by snarling and cursing at some imaginary foe.

Mr. Coghlan was, in those days, but a young man, and his many brilliant successes under our management far more than excused this solitary instance, among the varied claims we made upon his great ability, in which he failed to reach our expectations; while my error, after all, was not much greater than in asking a tenor to sing a bass song. Had I been less ambitious, and had chosen either *As You Like It* or *Much Ado about Nothing*, I think success would have rewarded the attempt. With what charm Ellen Terry plays Beatrice all the world now knows, and how beautiful she would have been as Rosalind, all the world may guess; while Coghlan, either as Benedick or as Orlando, would have been a perfect companion picture. We missed, therefore, an opportunity by my first choice of a Shakespearian play being unfortunate.

Apropos of the wonderful power of 'charm' possessed in so eminent a degree by Miss Terry, when, some few years later, she was playing at the Lyceum the part of Camma in Lord Tennyson's play, *The Cup*, I heard an able dramatic critic, who was going to see it for the second time, asked by a friend if he 'really thought the actress had all the power and physical strength to play the second act as perfectly as she did the first.' 'Not for a moment,' was the reply. 'But I would rather see Ellen Terry *try* to realize it, than see any other actress who plays such parts succeed in doing so.'

The signature of the accomplished writer of the following letter would alone justify its insertion here, without the few appropriate lines it contains:

'68, Thistle Grove, Brompton, *Friday, April* 23, 1875.

'Please, Mrs. Bancroft, may we come to see the *Merchant of Venice?* I only returned from the "Rialto" last Tuesday, and I am very anxious to behold the much-talked-of *mise-en-scène* at the Prince of Wales's. It may comfort Mr. Coghlan to know that I bought 2½ yards of *smaniglio*, or Venice gold chain, from Shylock himself, and that he was the quietest and most gentlemanly Jew I ever met, but a desperate "do."

'If you can spare seats for Monday next, you will delight Mrs. Sala, and inspire gratitude in the heart of your most faithful servant, GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.'

Meanwhile our poor *Merchant* was in a very bankrupt condition, hardly paying his nightly expenses. After three weeks of this state of things, we decided upon putting Lord Lytton's comedy *Money* in rehearsal, with a very powerful addition to the distribution of the characters—Mrs. Bancroft deciding to play Lady Franklin for the first time, while Ellen Terry was to be the Clara Douglas ; George Honey was re-engaged for his old part, Mr. Graves, and Coghlan would resume his admirable performance of the hero. Directly this was settled, I advertised in the newspapers that 'the performance of the *Merchant of Venice* having failed to attract large audiences, the play would be withdrawn,' which seemed to me a better course than a ridiculous evasion, such as, 'owing to prior arrangements,' etc., etc. I remember that I obtained great approval for my boldness, and our successes were, as a result, believed in. Strange as it may seem, directly after the announcement appeared, the audiences improved almost nightly—the many beauties of the production having, I suppose, begun to be talked about—and for the last few performances the theatre was quite three-parts full. We received a very influentially-signed petition, begging us to act the *Merchant of Venice* a little longer, in the hope that our reward must surely come. Whether this production might have grown to be one of the few plays that outlived failure and eventually reached success, it is now impossible to say ; for we stood by our advertisement, and withdrew it, after only thirty-six representations.

It is a great pleasure to record that during its brief career the play was seen by many actors, who were all enraptured with it—many of them saw the performance again and again.

I hope I have not wearied the reader with so long an account of this ill-fated revival, which was not, however, without its influence on much future work, and so served some good end ; but as I have so often had to tell of our successes, I ought to speak as frankly of our failures, and before finally dismissing the subject, I may say that the result of the run, when the receipts were averaged, was just to pay its way, leaving us minus the cost of the production, some three thousand pounds—a large sum to spend upon a play in such a little theatre.

Let me turn aside, if but for a page or two, from our own doings to tell of two performances, each of moment in their different ways, which occurred in the spring of this year—the *première* of *Our Boys*, and the appearance of the great Italian actor, Salvini, in London.

Apropos of the first event, I was one Saturday night in the billiard-room of the Garrick Club, where I recollect a group of men coming in, who said they had been to see the new play at the Vaudeville. All sorts of opinions were expressed, several present thinking the comedy would only have quite a moderate run, when Charles Mathews, who was playing pool, said quietly, 'I don't agree with you fellows. I was there, and haven't laughed so

heartily for a long while. Byron this time—he doesn't always—has taken his goods to exactly the right shop. That play is sure to run.'

A few words on Salvini's magnificent acting as Othello: which we first saw at a morning performance given at Drury Lane Theatre, when all the then representative actors were invited and almost entirely made up the vast assemblage. Salvini was only courteously received on his first entrance, but very quickly impressed the remarkable audience that no ordinary actor was before them. No ovation that we have ever taken part in equalled in enthusiasm his reception at the close of the third act; while his acting that day lives in our memory as the grandest and completest tragic effort that we ever saw. We have at least to thank the *Merchant of Venice* for frequent opportunities of seeing Salvini act, as Mrs. Bancroft was not concerned in it, and my small part ended quite early. We saw him often as Othello, once as the Gladiator, also as Hamlet —a performance, although the actor's physique and southern nature (as in the most modest way he asserted to me) were opposed to the part, full of exquisite beauties. To describe the wondrously touching acting of his death, let me drop my own feeble pen and take up one that was wielded then by G. H. Lewes, who wrote: 'No more pathetic death has been seen on the stage. Among its many fine touches there was the subtle invention of making the dying Hamlet draw down the head of Horatio to kiss him before sinking into silence, which reminds one of the "Kiss me, Hardy" of the dying Nelson; and this affecting motive was represented by an action as novel as it was truthful, namely, the uncertain hand blindly searching for the dear head, and then faintly closing on it with a sort of final adieu.' We had the pleasure to make Salvini's acquaintance, and still retain his valued friendship. The ability of the actor is only equalled by the modesty of the man.

We are glad to be able to print a letter from the great artist:

'*Juin* 9, 1875.

'CHÈRE MADAME,—Que vous êtes aimable!

'Je tiendrai votre joli cadeau comme un doux souvenir de votre sincère amitié. Ce sera un précieux talisman qui suivra le reste de ma carrière artistique, et qui, je suis sûr, m'apportera du bonheur.

'J'aurai le plaisir d'entendre la nouvelle pièce que vous allez représenter Lundi prochain, et j'accepterai la loge que vous avez eu l'aimabilité de me proposer.

'Acceptez de nouveau mes remerciements, et croyez-moi,—Votre dévoué, TOMMASO SALVINI.'

Although it was so short a time since *Money* had been played, the change in the theatre was magical, and all our friends at once came back in crowds. This was our cast of the well-known characters on May 29th: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Teesdale; Sir John Vesey, Mr.

Charles Collette; Sir Frederick Blount, Mr. Bancroft; Captain Dudley Smooth, Mr. Archer; Mr. Graves, Mr. George Honey; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. Coghlan; Mr. Stout, Mr. Arthur Wood; Mr. Sharp, Mr. Denison; An Old Member of the Club, Mr. F. Glover; Lady Franklin, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft); Georgina Vesey, Miss Carlotta Addison; and Clara Douglas, Miss Ellen Terry.

On Saturday, June 19th, we gave a morning performance to a crowded house of the smallest programme ever, I should say, issued in an important theatre, when Theyre Smith's charming little play, *A Happy Pair*, and W. S. Gilbert's *Sweethearts*, were acted; the performance lasted about an hour and three-quarters, six people only appearing on the stage. The cast of *A Happy Pair* was Mr. Honeyton, Mr. Bancroft; Mrs. Honeyton, Miss Ellen Terry. It was simply for this one occasion that we played it; but I remember now the laughter and applause it caused. The chief reason for the performance was to give poor Sothern, of whom at this time we saw a good deal, an opportunity he much coveted of seeing Mrs. Bancroft in *Sweethearts*. *Money* drew sixty brilliant houses, and ran until August 6th, the usual time we closed our season, a result partly, doubtless, due to a cold and rainy July. Although we had arranged with Charles Reade to revive *Masks and Faces*, the clever drama written by himself and Tom Taylor, in which we placed great faith, we decided to spare ourselves further strain of rehearsals until the autumn; so resolved, in spite of a fear that it would be exhausted for a time, to begin again with Lord Lytton's comedy until *Peg Woffington* should be ready to replace it.

HOLIDAY NOTES BY MRS. BANCROFT.

After this arduous season (for although the one failure had been far more than compensated for by the successes, still it left its wound), we were glad to get away and seek again lazy relief from work at Zurich and the Kaltbad, where we became acquainted with a charming old maiden lady, a sister of the late Dean Stanley. This time we travelled with a large and cumbersome joint-stock portmanteau, which we eventually christened the 'Eilgut,' for the reason that it was constantly being lost for three or four days together, and after telegrams had been sent in every direction to trace its whereabouts, and my anxiety had reached the highest pitch, I was informed that it was coming by the 'Eilgut,' a sort of *petite vitesse*, and very slow method of progression. I lost this wretched box so often that I determined to use it no more. (Ultimately it was degraded to an appearance in *Diplomacy*, in which play it was carried across the stage as Dora and Julian Beauclerc are about to start for their honeymoon. I don't know where it is now, and I don't care!) To return, I was constantly finding, on my arrival at various hotels, that this unfortunate and troublesome trunk was missing. On reaching Lucerne this year we discovered that our miserable box was again lost; what to do I could not imagine. We proceeded to

the Kaltbad with nothing but our travelling-bags, and days passed without news of the trunk. Several ladies, whom I knew, helped me, and I was positively dressed for nearly a week by subscription. I was sitting in my room one day completely heart-broken, and arranging to return to England as soon as possible, when I heard in the corridor an unusual commotion, and presently a chorus of voices to the tune of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.' I opened my room door and there saw a procession, headed by my old friend Mr. Palgrave Simpson, who carried an alpenstock, like a master of the ceremonies, followed by the wretched 'Eilgut,' elaborately decorated, and borne in triumph by two porters. After marching twice up and down the corridor, the cause of such frequent discomfort was deposited in my room, and then and there I vowed that never again would I bring the 'Eilgut' abroad, and I kept my word.

The loss of my box and the want of clothes did not finish my list of annoyances during my stay this year at the Kaltbad, as I was robbed of my sleep by an unpleasant next-door neighbour who snored terribly. The noise he made sounded more like the growl of some animal than the breathing of a human being. I watched for my persecutor day after day, but could never find him. I looked at every man I saw on the terrace, who seemed likely to be a snorer, with suspicion; but more than this I could never do. I found out his name in the bureau—he was a German—but from the description I received there, failed to identify him. I felt sure he was a big man, for only a big man could produce *such* a snore. During the day my *bête noir* would be out on some excursion, at *table d'hôte* I used to search with my eyes all round the room, but always failed to fix my accusation definitely on anyone. I hoped for every day to be his last in the hotel, but at night I found he still remained. If I hurried to bed early in order to get an hour or two's rest before he retired, it so happened that on those very nights he had returned from some expedition and had gone to bed early also. When he was tired the noise was louder and deeper, so I could always tell when his day had been fatiguing, for the sound was like the snore of a tired bull. It became so terrible at last that I decided upon leaving; for the hotel was too crowded for me to change my room, and I was literally ill for want of sleep, so we determined to go down by the little mountain railway to Vitznau, to catch the steamer for Lucerne, and there secure rooms for a few days. We took our seats in the train, each carriage of which is open, and simply divided into benches, and after we had started, I was on the point of dropping off to sleep (completely worn out for want of rest), when suddenly my eyes caught the number of the hated room my cruel tormentor occupied, marked in plain chalk figures on the soles of a pair of boots. There he was, with his ugly feet up—two benches off—on the opposite side, reading a newspaper, which completely hid the upper part of him. I eagerly watched him, and when at last he dropped his paper and

the face was revealed, behold, instead of the big, burly creature I expected, he was quite a little, undersized bit of humanity! 'Who from such a stem would look for such a'—snore? I was consoled when I found the porter had chalked his ugly shoes for the last time, and we learnt that he had taken his departure from the hotel.

Before returning to our mountain home, we went on to Lucerne for the day, and on board the steamer met the Duke of Connaught, whom I at first did not recognise in his suit of dittos and pot hat. His Royal Highness was pleased to enter into conversation with us, during which he noticed that several people on board were staring at me, and whispering to each other. The Duke was much amused, and laughingly remarked, 'You see, Mrs. Bancroft, I have the advantage of you here; they all know you, but they don't know me.'

After our return to the Kaltbad, we were standing one day on the terrace enjoying the beautiful view—the atmosphere being exceptionally clear, while the sun glittered as he well knows how in those high regions. Our attention was suddenly attracted by a hurried rush and bustle on the part of the waiters and maids, who were running about in all directions, hastily shutting and securing the *jalousies* of the hotel windows. On inquiry, we were answered by the *portier*, 'L'orage! l'orage!' and, sure enough, on looking in the direction he pointed towards, we saw a strange sight: a huge, black cloud was turning the corner of the opposite mountain like an angry war-horse, and from its nostrils came streaks of fire. It was followed by another and another; they seemed to glide so rapidly in frenzied pursuit, that one stood wondering what they were flying from. This was 'Monsieur l'Orage,' whose advent was always known by the furious *avant coureur* I have described. It was the most awful storm I ever witnessed even in the mountains, where sunshine and tempest are so often mingled. It was, indeed, a sudden change from gay to grave. The wind howled as if all the wild animals in the world had been lashed into a fury, and, maddened with rage, were going to devastate the earth. The thunder was terrible, and filled one with a religious awe, as if it meant the end of all things. The lightning came like knives cutting the clouds, with which it was at war, into shreds; then the hailstones, which were as large as filberts, fell with such force that they seemed to split the air as they descended. It was a terrible but grand experience. Presently a change, as sudden as the storm, restored to us the giant sun, and all was calm and beautiful again. In the evening we were discussing this event, when we were told a sad story of what had happened on the lake below us. A young Frenchman and his bride, who were passing part of their honeymoon at Lucerne, had engaged a boat for a sort of love-cruise, and although the boatman warned them of the danger of going alone, as a storm was brewing, the lover-husband declined his services. Not long afterwards the

anticipated storm broke out, and as the tiny boat with its happy load was about to turn a corner of the lake, the sudden squall capsized it. The husband was saved, but his bride, who but a few moments before was so joyous, so contented with her fate, was drowned. The sympathy for the poor stricken bridegroom was universal ; for a time he lost his reason, and could not be convinced that his young wife was dead. It was, indeed, a sad ending to so much happiness, and the story cast a gloom upon the place for a long time. As the ill-starred girl lay in her last sleep, one felt the words of Queen Gertrude :

> 'I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
> And not have strew'd thy grave.'

Apropos of these sudden changes in the weather on the Lake of Lucerne, there is an old well-known rhyme about its chief mountainous feature, the rugged Pilatus, which is made to act as a sort of local barometer. The lines run as follow :

> 'If Pilatus wears his cap, serene will be the day ;
> If his collar he puts on, you may venture on your way.
> But if his sword he wields, at home you'd better stay.'

The doggerel reminds me of a version of the prophecy given by a little German boy, who was learning English, and mixed up the two languages thus :

> 'Wen Pilatus hat sein hut
> Den de wedder's very gut ;
> Wen Pilatus hat sein degen,
> Den you know it's going to regen ;
> Wen Pilatus hat sein schwerz,
> Den de wedder's werse and werse.'

We thought we would make a change in the close of our holiday this year, and resolved to pass it at Ostend, where we had the great pleasure of being in the same hotel with an old and dear friend—the late Mr. Critchett—whose opportune arrival and surgical skill saved Mr. Bancroft from what might have been a serious illness, as Mr. Critchett found him suffering from creeping erysipelas, caused by a bite on the face by some diseased insect. When this trouble passed, we had a delightful time, during which, on the beautiful stretch of sands that lie out past the Marine Villa of the King of the Belgians, we began to study Triplet and Peg Woffington.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEASON OF 1875-76.

Masks and Faces in preparation—Changes in structure and treatment—Mrs. Bancroft on the character of Peg Woffington—On the reality of emotion on the stage—Charles Reade's criticism on the acting—Letters from Sir William Fergusson and George Vandenhoff—Commission to Byron to write a new comedy—*Wrinkles—Les Pattes de Mouche—The Moonstone*—Revival of *Ours*—Adaptation of *Nos Intimes*—Illness of Mrs. Bancroft and Miss Ellen Terry—Impending changes in the company—A dinner with H. J. Montague and Henry Irving—Our annual holiday—Practical jokes—Anecdote of Sir Julius Benedict—At the Eggischorn—Impromptu amusements—The Bel Alp—Meeting with Professor Tyndall.

INCLEMENT as the summer had been, so was the autumn which followed it magnificent; we returned home, in fact, to find weather that made one sigh to think our holiday had come to an end. The heat was even greater than we had found abroad, and the baked pavement of the still deserted streets seemed to reproach one for the stupidity of coming back so soon to the monotonous repetition of a well-worn play; and small blame to it that *Money*, when we recommenced our season on Saturday, September 18th, declined to draw more than moderate houses for the few weeks we should be obliged to act it, while *Masks and Faces* was prepared.

It was not an easy task to persuade Charles Reade (to whom the comedy belonged, he having some years before bought Tom Taylor's share from him, and with whom all our negotiation took place) to give his consent to the changes we sought to make in the play. At length, however, after many a tough fight, we won the day and gained our wish, afterwards having the great satisfaction of Charles Reade's approval of every change; and when the play reverted to him, he discarded the old book for ever, and ordered *replicas* of our prompt copy for his future use.

There have been so many and such varying statements made concerning these alterations of *Masks and Faces*, that perhaps the outline of facts we will give upon the subject may still have interest, especially to those connected with the two distinguished authors, who might be fairly called the Beaumont and Fletcher of this century.

First it was advisable, in our opinion, that the play should be in three instead of in two acts as hitherto, and an opening scene was suggested by ourselves to aid this view, Mrs. Bancroft drawing up a rough sketch of an interview between Quin and Kitty Clive, to end in a quarrel over their criticisms. This notion Reade at once agreed to, and in his large-hearted way proposed that Tom Taylor should be asked to write the dialogue, that he might have the fee

we proposed to give for the work, as it would be to him a little consolation for no longer sharing in the nightly royalties. Taylor agreed, wrote the scene admirably, and gracefully acknowledged our cheque for fifty pounds, which he was good enough to think a far larger sum than his work entitled him to accept. Some changes at the end of Act I. were made by Reade. The dialogue of the scene at Ernest Vane's house remained virtually the same so far as mere words went, although distinctly, here and there, it was better hooked-and-eyed together; a few speeches and lines, having no pretence in a literary sense, but of great value in the acting, were now and again added by Reade at our suggestion throughout the work; but it was the *treatment* of the play we chiefly ventured to alter, not the play itself.

Our great fight was over the end of it; and only after many struggles with Charles Reade did he allow us to cut out the old stagey, rhyming tag, and agree to the pathetic ending we proposed. We conquered him at last by acting to him what we wished to do, when Peg, just before we wanted the curtain to fall, tearfully accepted the tenderly though modestly offered sympathy of the grateful Triplet, and dropped her head upon his breast. Reade cried like a child, and said to her, 'You're right, my dear; you're a woman, and of course you're right; you shall have it your own way.' In a letter written afterwards he says, 'Dear Peg, you are too much for me; and after this I don't measure my wit against yours for a month or two. I cave in, as the Yankees say, and submit at once to your proposal.'

We had many a talk together about the play with Charles Reade, as to which was his share, and which was Tom Taylor's; he frankly told us the whole story of its growth and completion, always regarding the work as fairly divided between them. The conception of the play, which arose from his looking for a long time one day at Hogarth's portrait of Peg Woffington in the Garrick Club, and its most beautiful scene, were certainly Reade's; but Taylor was responsible for a delightful part of the second act, and undoubtedly put many of Reade's early ideas into more workmanlike shape.

Very diligent rehearsals attended this production, and we did not feel it ready to face the heat of criticism until November. On Friday, 5th, *Money* was withdrawn, and the following night we acted the revised version of Reade and Taylor's play for the first time, with the following cast: Sir Charles Pomander, Mr. Coghlan; Ernest Vane, Mr. Archer; Colley Cibber, Mr. Arthur Wood; James Quin, Mr. Teesdale; Triplet, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Snarl, Mr. F. Dewar; Mr. Soaper, Mr. F. Glover; Lysimachus, Master Glover; James Burdock, Mr. Stewart; Colander, Mr. Denison; Hundsdon, Mr. Newton; Peg Woffington, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft); Mabel Vane, Miss Ellen Terry; Kitty Clive, Miss Brennan; Mrs. Triplet, Miss Lee; Roxalana, Miss Glover. Act I.—The Green

Room of Old Covent Garden Theatre. Act II.—No. 51, Queen Square. Act III.—Triplet's Home.

I (S. B. B.) may here say it was not without much fear and trembling that I resolved to play the part of Triplet. I felt, however, unless I made some effort equally bold, that I should be doomed to the inanition of ringing the changes on what had now for some time grown to be called 'Bancroft parts.' Happily, through hard work and patient thought, my ambition met with some reward. During the run of the play, I remember attending a meeting of a theatrical character, held at the Mansion House. Its object has escaped my recollection ; but what lives in my memory is encountering Benjamin Webster there. The old actor, after looking long and earnestly at me for some time, said pleasant, graceful things of his own old part to the younger Triplet.

Success of the highest kind rewarded our work, and it has throughout been our impression that *Masks and Faces* has, in all ways, been one of our truest friends. Permission was obtained from the Committee of the Garrick Club to have copies made of some pictures of the time from its celebrated collection, and so we adorned the walls of the first act, which represented the green-room of Old Covent Garden Theatre, with reproductions of Grisson's portrait of Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington ; the well-known picture of Garrick as Richard III. ; Vandergucht's portrait of Woodward as Petruchio ; and Zoffany's Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard in *Macbeth*, dressed in court clothes of the period.

The beautiful tapestry chamber which formed the scene of the second act was, perhaps, with a group of characters on the stage, one of the most real pictures of those times ever shown in a theatre.

Charles Reade, although very critical, was very pleased. On reaching home after the first performance he wrote the following lines, and sent with them in the morning an autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's :

'Presented by Charles Reade to his friend Mrs. Bancroft upon her admirable personation of Peg Woffington in *Masks and Faces*. —C. R., Nov. 6, 1875.'

Let us follow this allusion to a letter of the real woman with one from her stage representative, which may have the interest of explaining a new view of the character of Woffington as she appears in the play.

MRS. BANCROFT ON PEG WOFFINGTON.

You ask me to explain to you why I played Peg Woffington so differently from previous readings of the part, giving another version almost of her character, and making her appear as a different woman from what the authors seemingly intended her to be, and as she had been represented by

other distinguished actresses. All great parts are capable of various conceptions, and it is often a thankless office to play a character which has been originally created by some one else, especially by an actress of position, and I felt this difficulty very keenly when I agreed to accept the part of Peg. With the public I felt safe, for some years had elapsed since *Masks and Faces* had been seen by them, and a new generation had, in the meantime, sprung up. But many of the critics remembered the great original, Mrs. Stirling; and when Charles Reade first spoke to me on the subject, I urged that the task would be a hard one for me, and I was frightened at the thought of it. There was, as far as I could see, but one way for me out of the difficulty, to treat the part in a distinctly new way; so I set to work and read the book carefully to find if it was possible to clothe Peg in a new dress. I had never seen the piece played, although I have a faint remembrance of its being acted somewhere in the country. Well, I first of all read the play through two or three times, as is my custom, to make myself perfectly acquainted with its argument. I then gave my whole attention to the character of Margaret Woffington, as she is depicted in the play; I pulled the part to pieces and put it together again according to my own lights and fancies. I felt a pleasure in doing this, and I will tell you why and how. While I am studying a part I never lose sight of it. I get between the lines and round about their meaning by reading them again and again until I am able to understand perfectly their purpose, which I know is the only way to arrive at that undercurrent of feeling which should travel from actor to audience. I study every emotion that the character is capable of, and then decide upon the rendering which touches me most and is best suited to my method and style. At last I absolutely live in the part, and associate myself so closely with it, that by the time I step on to the stage to play it, I am for the time, as it were, in thought and feeling, the person I represent.

When I read Peg Woffington I was deeply impressed by the beauty of the words she had to speak in her serious scenes. I soon felt that one who could utter such sentiments and make so great a sacrifice must be more than an ordinary woman, and possessing a nature far above her surroundings, capable of good deeds and noble aspirations. Her words in the first scene addressed to the man she loves, and to whom she confides her innermost thoughts, telling him how weary to her is the emptiness of her life, point to a superior mind. She wants to be a good woman, and asks him to help her. He teaches her to trust him, and promises all that she asks, and she is happy.

Here is an extract from the scene:

'I can only love my superior. Be frank and honest as the day, and you will be my superior, and I shall love you and bless the

hour you shone on my artificial life. It is no easy task : to be my friend is to respect me that I may respect myself the more ; to be my friend is to come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life—the recklessness of a vacant heart.'

She believes implicitly in this man, and bids him fill up the vacant place in her heart, thinking him worthy and honest. But when she discovers that he has betrayed, deceived, insulted her by presenting himself to her as an unmarried man, when all the time he had a young wife, her love now gives room for all the bitterness of injured pride, hatred, and revenge—revenge against him, and her, and all the world :

'He shall rue the hour he trifled with a heart and brain like mine.

'TRIPLET : But, his poor wife !

'PEG : His wife ! Are wives' hearts the only hearts that feel, and throb, and—break ! Let his wife look to herself. It is not from me that mercy can come to her.'

Then in the scene when, full of venom, she overhears a conversation between the young wife and poor old Triplet, the only friend who clings to Peg, the gentle sweetness and innocence of Mabel so affect her that her revenge and anger disappear, leaving the beauty of her nature to prompt her to make the greatest sacrifice in her power.

Here is a fragment of the scene between the two women :

'PEG : Such as you are the diamonds of the world ! Angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered. The poor heart which we both overrate shall be yours again. In my hands 'tis but painted glass at best, but set in the lustre of your love, it may become a priceless jewel. Will you trust me ?

'MABEL : With my life !'

Surely a woman who can utter such words must be by nature good and capable of fine emotions. She is sensitive, lovable, trusting and charitable, passionate, headstrong and impulsive, ready to act upon a revengeful impulse, however she might regret it afterwards ; she pines for honest friendship and finds it not, and in the last act one can see how her nature is warped and nearly spoiled. Read her farewell speech to Mabel, so simple, true, and pathetic :

'MABEL : In what way can I ever thank you ?

'PEG : When hereafter, in your home of peace, you hear harsh sentence passed on us, whose lot is admiration—rarely love, triumph, but never tranquillity—think sometimes of Margaret Woffington, and say stage-masks may cover honest faces, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe.'

Well, as the play was originally acted, after this touching farewell she goes off into laughter, and ends the play with a rhymed comic tag. Now, does not the idea of this jar upon your senses, after all the beautiful sentiments which she has expressed throughout the play? I could not have given any effect to the original end, because I could not feel it; it seemed unnatural; it was against my theory of Peg as I read her, and if Charles Reade had not allowed me to alter the end of the play I could not have acted the part. It was some time before I could bring him round to my way of thinking, so I illustrated my meaning by acting the last scene to him as I wished it to be done. I explained to him that, after his exquisitely-written farewell to Mabel, having restored the husband to the wife, with her own heart breaking all the while, she could not at once burst into comedy—for, although she despised the husband for his deception and treachery, she could not root out in a moment from her breast the love she had felt for him.

The change which I suggested was this: After Peg's farewell to Mabel, and while kissing her, her eyes meet Ernest's; she stands gazing at him, as if to realize the fact that he could have been capable of so much cruelty. Pale with emotion, she hands Mabel to him and watches them as they are going through the doorway, casting a last lingering look upon him. At that beautiful moment of her anguish, crushed and broken, I am convinced that she should be left to commune with her thoughts, with no one by her side but her one tried old friend Triplet, upon whose breast she leans, and at last gives way to the tears which have up to now been denied her. The curtain should fall upon these two figures, leaving Peg in the hearts of her audience, who have followed her in her sorrows, and must, therefore, pity her. While deeply sympathizing with the wife, they must love Peg for her noble conduct, and weep with her in her suffering.

During my rehearsal in the drawing-room, Charles Reade was silent; and at the end, when I looked at him for his opinion, I found that he was crying. He rose from his chair, took my hands in his, and said, 'You are right, you have made me cry; your instincts are right; it shall be so.' I acted it in this way, and the play has ever since been a great favourite with the public.

I now add, by way of postscript to these remarks, a few words I wrote with reference to the reality of emotion on the stage, which appeared in *Longman's Magazine*:

'The performance of a moving situation, without the true ring of sensibility in the actor, must fail to affect anyone. An emotional break in the voice must be brought about naturally, and by a true appreciation of the sentiment, or what does it become? I can only compare it to a bell with a wooden tongue—it makes a sound, but there it ends. I cannot simulate suffering without an honest sym-

pathy with it. I hold that without great nervous sensibility no one can act pathos. It is a casket with the jewel absent. The voice in emotion must be prompted by the heart; and if that is "out of tune and harsh," why then, indeed, the voice is "like sweet bells jangled." I was once much impressed by a small child's criticism. He watched for a long time, silently and attentively, a scene of great emotional interest between two people. When asked what he thought of it, he answered, "I like that one best." "Why?" "She speaks like telling the truth, and the other speaks like telling lies." What criticism can be finer than this? One was acting straight from the heart, the other from not even next door but one to it.'

BY S. B. B.

Under date November 15th we received a long and interesting letter of criticism from Charles Reade, on the acting of his play, which was written after three visits to the theatre, and occupied thirteen pages of letter-paper. The reader need not be alarmed: he shall only have certain extracts from them to read.

Of our own acting as Triplet and Peg Woffington the distinguished writer was so generous as to say:

'I really can see in these two performances no fault. There are a few lines, here and there, read somewhat differently from what I read them, but then they are read naturally and effectively; I ask no more, I don't want machines to act my plays. I repeat, I can see a wealth of thought, care, labour, and talent in these performances; and I can see nothing *wrong*. I shall by-and-by propose a single variation, but I have no correction to offer; and in particular I disown with contempt the shallow suggestion of those critics who would have Peg Woffington in Act II. shake off her blow entirely, and make those introductions with a comic gusto, forgetting alike that she is acting the woman of quality and that she is not herself as happy as a lark. No; give me the actor who considers not each line only, but the dominant sentiment of the entire scene, and deals with the lines accordingly.

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'. . . . . going off through taking snuff without discretion. Very few actors are to be trusted with a snuff-box; indiscreetly used, it fritters points away, instead of sharpening them.'

Charles Reade's praise of Mr. Coghlan's fine acting as Sir Charles Pomander, and of Ellen Terry's exquisite performance of Mabel Vane, is faintly qualified. He then falls foul, in his severest strain, of one actor in the cast, lengthily and ably analyzing the character, the rendering of which greatly distressed him. The letter ends:

'But who can foretell the future? You and Mrs. Bancroft, and Miss Terry, have got the third act pretty much to yourselves, and

you may be able to make the piece safe. Still, you must not fancy that the play is written unevenly. Of course, it is written on the principle of climax, and the third act is the most brilliant ; but, remember, too, in the third act we grease the fat sow, for the act is nearly all in the hands of first-rate actors.

'You will wonder at this tirade, but the fact is, my winter cough has come on. I shall most likely not be out at nights for three months, and may never again have the great pleasure of seeing your performance and Mrs. Bancroft's, so I say my say and exhaust the subject.

'If . . . has moved my bile, everything else is so gratifying that I shall be sure to forgive even poor . . . ; all the sooner for having let out at him in this outrageous way, and so eased my mind.—Yours very sincerely, CHARLES READE.'

Among our collection of letters are also some others that should be placed here, the first being from our valued friend, Sir William Fergusson :

'16, George Street, Hanover Square, W., *March* 15, 1876.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I have to thank you most heartily for the great treat of last night. I have rarely enjoyed myself more thoroughly at the theatre. I was familiar with the play in former days, when Mrs. Stirling and Webster were in all their force ; and, though prepared by newspaper and other reports to be pleased, I fancied that old recollections would cause me to feel a blank.

'From the beginning to the end last night my interest never flagged ; and, with pleasant memories of the past, I cannot refrain from saying to you and your good man how truly I was gratified.

'Both of you must be much fatigued with such hard work, and I sincerely wish you a continuance of health and strength for your arduous labours.

'We suppose ourselves considerable theatrical critics in this house, and I am glad to say that we are all of the same opinion in regard to the enjoyment of last evening.

'With kind regards to Squire, I remain, yours very sincerely, WM. FERGUSSON.'

Then came some pleasant lines from an old actor who passed many years in America, and whose acquaintance we regret never to have made :

'101, Gower Street.

'DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you for a great pleasure last night, in the charming performance of Mrs. Bancroft. It is years since I saw the play, and I confess to you that I did not know there was an English-speaking actress who could move me to tears and laughter by turns as the accomplished Peg Woffington did last night. Her comedy reminded me of poor Nisbett in her best days ;

and her pathos had the sincerity in it which that accomplished comedienne never reached.

'I had not seen you act before, and your Triplet was a worthy pendant to your lady's admirable picture.—With many thanks, I am, yours faithfully, GEO. VANDENHOFF.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

Before we finally dismiss *Masks and Faces* upon its bright career, let us mention the charming Woffington Gavotte, dedicated to Mrs. Bancroft, and expressly composed for the second act by Mr. Meredith Ball, which earned at once exceptional and universal success. For months it was rare to come across a selection of music that did not comprise it.

Our search after new plays never ceased. Of all the wilderness of manuscripts that we had read since Robertson's death, only *Man and Wife* and *Sweethearts* seemed to us worthy of production. A new play written for us by H. J. Byron we had felt bound to decline when it was finished (which subsequently failed entirely when produced elsewhere), preferring now to give him a commission for a comedy in its place, with a guarantee to act it immediately *Masks and Faces* was withdrawn. The bare outline of plot decided on between us was, roughly, in this wise: the suggestion growing from the idea of a sort of amplification of the young people and the old people in Gilbert's delightful play. There were to be contrasts of age throughout: in the first act young folk were to injure old folk, and in the end, when they had grown quite old themselves, were to redeem their error, and repair their wrong, by compensating for it to the youthful descendants—to be acted by the same people—of the old couple whom they had wronged in their youth. This was accompanied by a strict injunction that the parts for Coghlan and Ellen Terry were to be of the first importance, while ours might be quite secondary.

In February Byron read to us two acts of what was to be a three-act comedy, and bitter was our disappointment; the only parts of any value were those destined for ourselves, while the intended story was quite departed from and drifted into other channels. We determined to face our obligation, and to hope for something better from the last act. Unfortunately this did not mend matters, for we found it impossible even to ask Miss Terry to take the part designed for her, and Mr. Coghlan refused (with every justice) to accept the character intended for him, after the author's reading.

With the firm resolve never again to blindly accept an unwritten play from any dramatist, we went bravely to work upon *Wrinkles*, as Byron eventually christened his play. So strongly, however, were we convinced how little right we had to hope for success, that we turned for the first time to a fruitful source we had till now, although often strongly tempted, abstained from drawing on—the

French stage—to find something there we could get ready quickly if our forebodings should be realized. We had often and often hankered after Sardou's *Pattes de Mouche*, and now decided that it should be at once got ready. Towards this end, we saw Tom Taylor, and arranged with him, as a master of the art of adaptation, for a new version of this brilliant comedy, on lines he quite agreed with, to be prepared with all speed, that it might be in our hands to stem the torrent of disaster we felt, still more surely as we advanced with the rehearsals, must be the fate of our new venture.

An announcement that Taylor was engaged upon this work for us appeared in the columns of the *World*, and soon afterwards was followed by a letter from Hare to say that the idea of *Les Pattes de Mouche* had also occurred to him, and that he wished to revive the existing English version of the play, *A Scrap of Paper*, to replace a programme which had failed to attract. Our emotions were very conflicting between a strong desire to produce a version of the comedy ourselves, and an equally strong desire not to thwart the wishes of an old friend, towards whom, in fact, we were anxious to show good feeling. This desire proved the stronger of the two, and with very deep regret we stopped Tom Taylor's work, and gave up two parts we have always wished, and even still would like, to play.

Another novelty we hoped to have on hand was one which Wilkie Collins was engaged upon—a stage version of his extraordinary book, *The Moonstone*. This we looked towards as the opening play for Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Arthur Cecil at our theatre, they having accepted engagements with us which were to commence in the following autumn.

Although our fears for Byron's comedy were so great, we spared neither money nor pains over it, and, anxious to know its fate, we withdrew *Masks and Faces* before there was any real need, knowing it would in the future prove a valuable revival, for it had only been acted a hundred and thirty nights. On the morning before *Wrinkles* was produced, we met our old friend Corney Grain in Bond Street, who asked us if we were going to have what he called 'our usual success.' We at once said, 'No,' and that its fate was sealed; for we were never blinded to the faults of the play by the excellence of our own parts, which contained some of the most amusing things its gifted author ever wrote. We went to our work with heavy hearts to face the following programme: On Thursday, April 13th, 1876, for the first time, *Wrinkles*, written by Henry J. Byron. Act I.—Spring: April, 1855. Characters: Graham Carre, Mr. Flockton; Harold Carre, Mr. Reginald Moore; Bob Blewitt, Mr. Bancroft; Wilfred Gordon, Mr. Archer; Renshaw, Mr. Newton; Reuben Gray, Mr. Glover; Kate Rayner, Miss Carlisle; Winifred Piper, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft). Act. II.—Autumn: September, 1875. Act. III.—Winter: March, 1876. Characters; Mr. Carre, Mr. Reginald Moore; Wilfred Gordon,

Mr. Archer; Mr. Blewitt, Mr. Bancroft; Fred Lynton, Mr. Kyrle; Mr. Radford, Mr. Teesdale; Gray, Mr. Glover; Kate Carre, Miss Carlisle; Miss Piper, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft).

There is an indescribable magnetism between the audience and the actor on 'first nights,' and although the parts of Bob Blewitt and Winifred Piper were so amusing, and provoked such roars of laughter that at times they almost threatened to save the play, the story was so poor, and Byron had been so obstinate about some proposed changes at the end of it, that our fears were prophetic, and the curtain fell to a chorus of ominous sounds, which pronounced the play to be a flat failure.

On the following morning poor Byron came to us very contrite, and, when too late, made the alterations we had wanted from the first. He deeply regretted the failure for our sakes, as well as his own, and wished to forego all fees. This, of course, we would not listen to, and resolved to turn the tide as best we could. It was here our wished-for *Pattes des Mouche* would have served us well and justified our belief, as was amply proved by the success which had attended the production of *A Scrap of Paper* at the Court Theatre.

It was in *Wrinkles* that Mr. Kyrle Bellew made his first appearance, whom it was a great pleasure to us to be the means of introducing to the stage, in remembrance of our friendship with his father.

Faute de mieux, for we were in a terrible fix, we decided on a revival of *Ours* to help us out of the difficulty. Ellen Terry at once consented to play Blanche Haye, adding, with great good nature, that she would even have taken the part in *Wrinkles* had we asked her. We announced the failure of Mr. Byron's comedy in our advertisements, and withdrew it after eighteen performances.

On Saturday, May 6th, *Ours* was acted with the following cast of the characters: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Archer; Colonel Shendryn, Mr. Flockton; Captain Samprey, Mr. Denison; Angus Mac Alister, Mr. Coghlan; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. Collette; Lady Shendryn, Mrs. Leigh Murray; Blanche Haye, Miss Ellen Terry; and Mary Netley, Mrs. Bancroft.

As the comedy had not been played since its run in 1870-71, it really came out quite fresh again, and was received with all the old enthusiasm. Indeed, we believe that we might have put the six Robertsonian plays upon a sort of dramatic wheel, and have gone on for years, with nothing but successive revivals of them in their turn, had neither madness nor crutches intervened. The charm of Ellen Terry's acting on this occasion was a great advantage, and added much to the effect of the second act—perhaps the cleverest in all the author's works: appealing as it does so powerfully to the imagination without introducing a single element of drama upon the actual scene.

The Moonstone, in which it was proposed that Mr. and Mrs.

Kendal should act for the first time with us as Franklin Blake and Rachel Verrinder, while Mr. Arthur Cecil was to be the Betteridge, we having ourselves agreed to take the parts of Sergeant Cuff and Miss Clack (this tract-distributing, amusing spinster would have offered Mrs. Bancroft an opportunity for character-painting which was altogether removed from the range of parts she had been acting, and she resigned it with regret), was thought by Wilkie Collins and ourselves to be, perhaps, too melodramatic in its treatment for the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and better suited to follow the great success of the same author's *New Magdalen* at the Olympic. When this decision was arrived at, we found ourselves somewhat stranded for an autumn production suitable to the theatre and the new-comers. Nothing new appeared upon the scene, and, following up our faith in *Les Pattes de Mouche*, Sardou's works were again applied to, the result being a decision to have a version of *Nos Intimes* prepared. Mr. B. C. Stephenson, who then had always written as Mr. 'Bolton Rowe,' had long been anxious to do some work for us, and he, in the first place, was commissioned to commence the adaptation, which was completed by Mr. Clement Scott, who wished to preserve his *incognito*, and chose the *nom de plume* of 'Saville Rowe.' Mr. Scott was selected as *collaborateur* on account of his marvellous power of speed, and he revised and much improved the adaptation with great rapidity.

Ours, meanwhile, was drawing houses crowded in every part, as though it were a brand-new play, when the full tide of this great success received an unhappy check through sudden illness. On Thursday, June 15th, Mrs. Bancroft was unable to finish the part of Mary Netley, and had to be taken home in a state of great suffering after the second act. She struggled through her work on the following evening, but on Saturday a long illness befell her, and her sister Blanche took her place at the theatre. On the Monday evening—too late, unfortunately, to make any arrangements to replace her—Miss Ellen Terry was also taken ill, and telegraphed her inability to act. It may be easily imagined that the double calamity of Mrs. Bancroft and Miss Ellen Terry both having to withdraw from the theatre was a death-blow to the revival. At the end of the season there were important changes in the company. Miss Ellen Terry was going to the Court Theatre; and Mr. Coghlan had decided to try his fortunes in America. It was at this time, also, that Mr. James ended his long and friendly connection with the theatre as our business manager, Mr. Charles Walter being engaged as his successor. These changes were carried even further, for we had resolved upon an entire and still more elaborate redecoration of the theatre during the vacation, and the work had been for a long time in progress.

In the summer of this year I met by chance H. J. Montague in the Strand, who was on a visit for a few weeks from America, which country he had now quite made his home. While we were talking,

Henry Irving joined us, and we all three arranged to dine together. The remembrance of the few happy hours we so passed are tinged with the sad thought that I never saw Montague again.

The rehearsals of the version of *Nos Intimes*, which was to be called *Peril*, occupied the time until the close of the season on August 4th. We then went for our holiday abroad, Mrs. Bancroft's health being sufficiently restored to allow her to travel by easy stages. A few pleasant days were again passed with friends at the Baur au Lac, Zurich; afterwards we went on to the Kaltbad, where we found Palgrave Simpson, who seemed a sort of summer fixture there, Arthur Cecil, and Clement Scott among the visitors.

Those were the days of youth and high spirits, and when I am afraid I must confess to have been something of a practical joker; even in such a boyish fashion as one night, when a friend and I had the outside of the hotel to ourselves—for the chance happened while a dance was going on in the drawing-room, which opened by very large French windows on to the terrace—driving some Swiss cows, which had strayed down the mountain, into the midst of the dancers, who scattered themselves in all directions with cries of 'Les vaches! les vaches!' We must have plagued the musicians terribly, too, for we were always busy in the morning hiding the drum-sticks. The performer on the noisy instrument they belonged to passed much of his time in violent gesticulations, and uttering the oft-repeated question, 'Wo sind die Trommel-schlägel?'

NOTES BY M. E. B.

Anecdotes of eminent people are generally interesting, as we think the following incident in the life of so old a friend of the public as the eminent musician, Sir Julius Benedict, will be. It occurred during this stay at the Kaltbad, where we were much amused by constantly discovering strange likenesses amongst the visitors to many of our acquaintances and friends, until at last we spoke of them by the names of those whom they resembled. There was an old lady in the hotel whose features so wonderfully suggested Sir Julius Benedict, that we never called her, among ourselves, by any other name. Whether reading, writing, sitting, or walking, she still was the living image of Sir Julius.

One terribly wet day, when we were quite in cloudland, the mist being so dense that nothing could be seen beyond the railings of the terrace, and few had ventured beyond it, who should appear, to our amazement, but the veritable Sir Julius himself, having, in spite of the weather, come up from Lucerne for the purpose of seeing the Rigi.

He told us that when he started it was finer, and he was determined not to turn back, as he had never seen the Rigi, and was obliged to return to England on the following day, adding, 'I am old now, and may never have another opportunity, so I must see the mountain to-day, wet or dry.'

With wonderful pluck he walked in the drenching rain from the Kaltbad to the Kulm, had a look round, but of course saw very little, for view there was none. He then walked down again to our hotel, and, after having coffee with us, expressed a wish to see the principal rooms. When we came to the large drawing-room, we saw the little old lady who went by the name of 'Sir Julius,' sitting reading in an easy-chair at the farther end of it. As we entered we looked at one another, and, with a smile, wondered whether we should draw attention to the resemblance. In a moment our merriment was changed to sentiment. No sooner had Sir Julius's name been uttered, and he had advanced a few steps towards his prototype, than the old lady looked up, fixed her eyes upon him for a moment, as though to realize, as it were, the fact that she was not dreaming, then rose from her chair, approached slowly, and with tears in her eyes exclaimed, 'Ach, Jules! mein Gott, Sind sie es!' The old man started, and seemed suddenly affected, then, kissing both her hands, said, 'Meine liebe! meine alte Freundin!' Greatly surprised at this touching recognition, we left the old couple alone, and they conversed for a considerable time together.

Before leaving, Sir Julius told us the history of this little drama. The old lady had been the object of his earliest love, the first real romance of his life, and they had not met for full forty years. I never forgot this little episode, and, when next I played the part of Jenny Northcott in *Sweethearts*, I repeated some of it in the scene where Henry Spreadbrow returns, after an absence of thirty years, to find that his early love had remained constant to his memory all that time. It was a touch of nature which I could not do better than imitate.

The following letter of mine will describe our movements when we left the Lake of Lucerne :

'Hotel Monnet, Vevey, *Saturday, September* 2 (1876).

'MY DEAR ——,—We were driven here by bad weather in the mountains, and have found the sun again.

'I will now tell you more of our holiday travels. When we left the Kaltbad, our journey was made very pleasant by having our old friends Arthur Cecil and Clement Scott as travelling companions. I had an attack of hay fever (my old enemy) on our way to Andermatt, which inflamed my eyes dreadfully and left me so miserable and depressed, that on our arrival at the hotel, instead of being able to join our party at dinner, I was glad to go to bed. By the next morning, however, I was quite myself again, and we continued our journey by carriage, over the Furka Pass. At the little inn on the summit we read the Queen's signature, written some years ago, as "Countess of Kent," in the visitors' book. Our next stopping-place was the Rhone Glacier Hotel, where the flies were so thick on the ceiling of our room that it had the appearance of being covered

with a heavy black pattern. I laugh as I write this, for when Arthur Cecil came down to breakfast he said, "Oh, Mrs. B., I have had such a night!" It appeared that before going to bed he had pulled the bell-rope and disturbed what seemed a myriad of flies, which had taken up their quarters upon it; having been so suddenly alarmed they were restless all night, and tormented poor Arthur dreadfully. The next morning the air was so full of these creatures that I was glad to dress quickly and get away. They were quite as tiresome as mosquitoes, only not so vicious.

'We made our way to the Eggischorn, the men walking to the top whilst I was taken up *chaise à porteur*. We were unfortunate in our weather during our three days' stay there, and none of us were able to see much. It was intensely cold, and one night, when everybody got as near to the wood fire as possible, all looking the reverse of happy, I suggested to Mr. Cecil that he and I should try to make the evening a little pleasanter, so we began by playing games, and introduced one which chanced to be quite new to them all. I placed the visitors round me in a circle, standing in the middle myself as conductor of an imaginary orchestra, asking my "band" to choose various musical instruments, and to play in dumb show so long as I conducted with the *bâton*; but of course you will know the game, so I need not describe it. All the visitors joined in it heart and soul, and it was most amusing to see the sage-looking scholars and pedagogues enjoying the fun. One of my orchestra was Dr. George Johnson, the celebrated physician, who, with his two daughters, was up there; another resident was Dr. Jex Blake. Thus we turned a dull evening into a merry one.' [NOTE.—A long time afterwards, at an evening party, a gentleman came up to me, saying, 'Let me bring myself to your recollection, Mrs. Bancroft. I was the Jew's-harp in your Eggischorn orchestra some years ago.'] 'The next night, still wet and misty, the visitors seemed to look to us for help again, so with the addition of dumb crambo (as I have never seen it done before), we sent them all to bed at midnight instead of 9.30, their usual hour. Even the tired servants could not be persuaded to retire to rest. When we left the hotel, the visitors turned out *en masse* to see us off. I forgot to tell you before that we met the young black Prince of Abyssinia, who was under the care of Dr. Jex Blake. He was highly intelligent and interesting to talk to. One day I found him reading "The Last Days of Pompeii," and I remarked that I had read the book three times myself. He answered, "Well, I think I must read it all through again, I am so very pleased with it."

'Then came a lovely walk (for Mr. Bancroft and the others, I being still taken *chaise à porteur*) over the Rieder Alp, and across the foot of the great Aletsch Glacier, up to the primitive little inn on the Bel Alp.

'After staying there three days we started (the same procession as before) for Brigue; the morning was very cold, and Professor

Tyndall, whose acquaintance, with that of Mrs. Tyndall, we had the pleasure of making, very kindly insisted upon wrapping me up in his travelling plaidie, which I sent back to him by one of the porters who carried me down the mountain. On the way, Mr. Scott walked by the side of my chair-bearers and was telling me of an accident which once befell Palgrave Simpson, who fell and injured his foot, in the very descent which we were making. Directly afterwards we heard shouts and cries lower down the steep, stony path, and sent on one of our porters to ascertain what was the matter. It transpired that Arthur Cecil, who had gone on in advance, had fallen and sprained his foot badly, being led by a man on each side of him into Brigue. It seemed so strange that this should have happened just at the moment when I was listening to the account of another accident in a similar way, and on the same mountain! I shall write again soon.—Ever affectionately, M. E. B.'

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SEASON OF 1876-77.

Redecorating and refurnishing—Production of *Peril*—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Arthur Cecil join the company—A great success—Theatrical banquet at the Mansion House: the chief guests—A tribute to T. W. Robertson—A seaside holiday: a veritable Mrs. Malaprop—Real and sham poverty—First series of *matinées*—Journey to Paris to see Sardou's *Dora*; price paid for it—John Parry's farewell—Mrs. Bancroft's first public reading—Complimentary benefit to Henry Compton—Benjamin Webster's last appearance—An episode—Letter from him on *London Assurance*—A trip to Paris—*The Vicarage* and *London Assurance* produced—Mrs. Bancroft's part as the Vicar's wife—Letter from James Anderson—Mrs. Langtry—*An Unequal Match* in rehearsal—Holiday-making—A 'Dramatic Contrast'—First visit to the Engadine—The Stelvio Pass—Blocked at Gossensass—Innsbruck and Salzburg—The salt-mines of Berchtesgaden.

WE had a very busy ten days before our re-opening, knowing the hazardous card we had resolved to play by venturing for the first time into French drama. Although our main attention was given to the play, some part of it was, perforce, bestowed upon the new decorations and the furniture, which was replaced throughout the theatre. The general tone was deep amber satin and dark red, in place of the former light blue. Both tiers of box-fronts were decorated with allegorical paintings typical of the plays we had produced, and, to harmonize with a peacock frieze over the proscenium, which was very elaborately painted on a gold ground, handsome fans made of peacocks' feathers were attached to each of the private boxes by gilt chains.

BEGUN BY S. B. B.

There is an old superstition that these beautiful plumes bring

sickness with them. On the opening night of the season it so befell that an occupant of one of the front stalls was seized with a fit during the first act of *Peril*, and a lady had to be taken home through sudden illness from a private box. Only a single audience saw the fans, for this strange assertion, as it were, that there might be truth in the superstitious saying, ended in their banishment for ever.

Barring some nervousness caused to the actors by these little *contretemps* in front of the curtain, all went well behind it. The play and the new-comers were well received, and our anxieties set at rest by its enthusiastic reception. The company was reinforced by such leading members as Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Arthur Cecil, with valuable supporters in Henry Kemble and Charles Sugden, as the playbill of the re-opening will show :

The theatre has been redecorated from designs suggested by Mr. Bancroft, executed by Mr. Gordon, Mr. Harford, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Ballard.

On Saturday, September 30th, 1876, at eight o'clock, will be produced a new comedy in four acts, called PERIL, *adapted for the English stage from M. Victorien Sardou's 'Nos Intimes,' by Mr. Saville Rowe and Mr. Bolton Rowe.*

SIR GEORGE ORMOND, BART.	MR. BANCROFT.
SIR WOODBINE GRAFTON, K.C.S.I.	MR. ARTHUR CECIL.
PERCY GRAFTON	MR. W. YOUNGE.
DR. THORNTON	MR. KENDAL.
CAPTAIN BRADFORD	MR. CHARLES SUGDEN.
MR. CROSSLEY BECK	MR. KEMBLE.
MEADOWS	MR. NEWTON.
KEMP	MR. GLOVER.
LADY ORMOND	MISS MADGE ROBERTSON. (Mrs. Kendal.)
LUCY ORMOND	MISS BUCKSTONE.
MRS. CROSSLEY BECK	MRS. LEIGH MURRAY.
SOPHIE	MISS HERTZ.

The scene is laid at Ormond Court.

A new one-act play, written by Mr. Saville Rowe, was announced at the foot of the programme. This referred to *The Vicarage*, which had been charmingly written at our suggestion by Mr. Clement Scott on Octave Feuillet's little story *Le Village*.

Naturally enough, there was much division of opinion in the Press as to the merits of *Peril*, and some repining that we had not been able to find a new English comedy to our liking.

The play was splendidly placed upon the stage : the old oak hall of Ormond Court took days to erect, and was so elaborately built with its massive staircase and rooms leading from a gallery as to make it impossible to remove it entirely for change of scene. We so arranged the play as to allow the hall to remain almost intact during three acts, the boudoir being constructed to be 'set' inside the walls of it ; in fact, from November to the following April the

stage wore the aspect, day and night, of an Elizabethan interior, furnished with a wealth of oak and armour, so mixed with decorative china and modern luxuries as to make it often worth a visit apart from its stage aspect.

The success of the production was extraordinary, and maintained receipts as [illegible]s any of its predecessors in the little theatre excepting only *School*.

I grew to like my own part very much, although when first the play was thought of I had a great wish to act the Doctor. This, however, we gave to Mr. Kendal, it being very desirable to make so important an addition to the company happy. Sir George Ormond, with his tender vein of manly pathos in the third act, became quite a compensation, and I believe the performance advanced my reputation.

On October 26th, a banquet was given at the Mansion House to the theatrical profession by the Lord Mayor, Mr. Alderman Cotton. At this lapse of time it may be interesting if the reader is reminded by a list of the chief guests who then were thought the leading actors and dramatic lights of the town :

Miss Carlotta Addison, Mr. James Albery, Mr. G. W. Anson, Mr. F. Archer, Signor Arditi, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, Mr. Barnes, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Barrett, Mr. Shiel Barry, Mr. W. Belford, Mr. and Mrs. Billington, Miss Kate Bishop, Mr. E. L. Blanchard, Madame Bodda (Miss Louisa Pyne), Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Brough, Mr. Edgar Bruce, Mr. Buckstone, Miss Lucy Buckstone, Alderman Sir Robert Carden, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mrs. Nye Chart, Mr. and Mrs. John Clarke, Mr. John Coleman, Mr. Charles Collette, Mr. H. B. Conway, Mr. George Conquest, Mr. H. T. Craven, Mr. Creswick, Mr. Dillon Croker, Mr. Charles Dickens, Mr. Everill, Miss Farren, Mr. Fernandez, Mr. David Fisher, Mr. Flockton, Miss E. Fowler, Mr. W. S. Gilbert, Miss Glyn, Mr. Otto Goldschmidt, Madame Lind Goldschmidt, Mr. Corney Grain, Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, Mr. Andrew Halliday, Mr. Charles Harcourt, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Henderson (Miss Lydia Thompson), Mr. W. J. Hill, Miss Henrietta Hodson, Mr. and Miss Hollingshead, Mr. George Honey, Mr. Howe, Miss Rose Hersee, Mr. David James, Miss Fanny Josephs, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. C. Kelly, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. J. Knowles, Mr. H. Labouchere, Mrs. S. Lane, Miss Larkin, Miss Leighton, Mrs. Arthur Lewis (Miss Kate Terry), Miss Litton, Mr. Charles Lyall, M. Marius, Mr. Frank Marshall, Mr. Henry Marston, Mr. Mead, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, Mr. Paul Merritt, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Monckton, Mrs. Gaston Murray, Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. Odell, Miss M. Oliver, Mr. John Parry, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Planché, Mr. R. Reece, Mr. and Mrs. German Reed, Mr. Righton, Mr. W. Rignold, Mr. Carl Rosa, Miss Amy Roselle, Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, Mr. Ryder, M. and Madame Sainton, Mr. G. A. Sala, Mr. Clement Scott, Mr. E. T. Smith, Mrs. Stirling, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Stirling, Mr. C. Sugden, Mrs. Swanborough, Miss Ada Swanborough, Mr. Tom Taylor, Mr. Edward Terry, Miss Ellen Terry, Miss M. Terry, Mr. Thomas Thorne, Mr. C. Vandenhoff, Mr. W. H. Vernon, Miss Venne, Mr. and Mrs. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Charles Warner, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan, Mr. Horace Wigan, Mr. W. G. Wills, Hon. Lewis Wingfield, Mrs. John Wood, and others.

We can relate an amusing incident which occurred during the repast. One of the waiters handed some soup to a distinguished

actress, who declined it. The man then said, with a persuasive smile, 'Turtle soup, ma'am.' The dish was still refused, evidently to the waiter's amazement, for he returned to the charge with the remark, 'REAL *turtle*, ma'am!' When the lady still said 'No,' the expression on the man's face of mingled surprise, pity, and contempt must be imagined.

There were, of course, many speeches, for one of which I was called upon, and took occasion to allude to the late Mr. Robertson in this way: 'In her endeavour, at the outset of management, to tune, as it were, the fancy of modern manners to the beating of the heart, Mrs. Bancroft was strengthened with the strong hand of genius, and encouraged by the sympathy of a friend. When Thomas William Robertson was taken from us, we, and the stage we love, mourned a common friend. His was no chance success, as many have insisted; it was lasting. His influence was not ephemeral; it is with us now.'

A SEASIDE HOLIDAY BY MRS. BANCROFT.

Peril was so established in the favour of the public, that I spent some weeks at Brighton, being joined for the Sundays and Mondays by my husband, and pleasant detachments of friends both among the company and outside its cheery circle. Long drives and walks to the Dyke or Rottingdean passed the afternoons, and merry dinners wound up the evenings.

We took part of a house on the King's Road, where there was a very remarkable young person engaged as upper-housemaid, who had the wonderful gift of twisting the Queen's English about in such a manner that it was at times more than difficult to understand her meaning. I don't think she knew herself what the words she tried to pronounce meant, but it was her evident delight to give utterance to the most extraordinary gibberish I ever listened to. She was a veritable Mrs. Malaprop from a housemaid's point of view. I accidentally from my dressing-room overheard conversations between her and a fellow-servant, and if the door was partly open, I confess I was so attracted by her wonderful power of word-twisting that I did not shut it. She assumed a kind of mincing way of speaking, and I took down in pencil all the wonderful things she said. In the following conversation I reproduce them in their integrity:

ANNE: 'Where does your parents live then?'

JANE: 'They used to reside in 'Ighgate (put that picture straight, it 'esitates me), but my mother found the air of 'Ighgate too strong for her, and when she took ill the doctor said she must move to a more atmospheric place. My poor mother had a bad time with my father. He was a cruel 'usband, and behaved to her like a medicated scoundrel.'

ANNE: 'Well, I never!'

JANE: 'He was her second husband, you know, and we never

liked him. My poor dear father died five years ago. His sufferings were awful; he had a couple of ulsters in his inside.'

ANNE: 'What, *two* of 'em?'

JANE: 'Yes. So he died.'

ANNE: 'I should think he did.'

JANE: 'We didn't wish mother to re-wed, and we up and told her one day that if she did we would go out of the house, as any second husband we should look upon as an antelope.'

ANNE: 'Why, of course.'

JANE: 'Well, she did marry again, and he was a punishment to her, for he was always ill and complaining. Mother was nothing but a nurse. First he had an illustrated sore throat, and was awful bad when the influential gales was blowin'; but he died of various veins in his legs, a year ago, I am happy to say, for he hated us, and we hated him. He gave himself such airs and got that *'aughty* that at last he arrived at such a perrogative he couldn't consume it!'

I frequently spent my early morning in studying a new part, going down to the beach and sitting on a bench there in a quiet spot. One day I found myself quite alone for some time, when, presently, I observed two ragged little girls playing amongst the shingle. They were not near enough to disturb me, so I made no attempt to move. By-and-by, however, one of them, who had been staring at me from a little distance, became more interested in my occupation, and gradually ventured nearer. She stood gazing at me for some time, which made me feel fidgety, and I was just on the point of telling the child to run away, when, after a snuffle (for I presume pocket-handkerchiefs were at a premium with her) she started a conversation. Her costume was limited to a poor ragged frock over nothing at all, neither shoes nor stockings, long lank hair, and an old straw-hat with the torn crown hanging on one side of a very dirty face. She stood with her hands behind her, and commenced:

CHILD: 'Are you readin', loidy?' (snuffle).

SELF: 'Why, of course; can't you see, child?'

CHILD: 'What are you a-readin' of?'

SELF: 'A book.'

CHILD: 'Is it a *noice* book? Is there fairies wot gives you things?'

SELF: 'What things?'

CHILD: 'Puddens and coikes!' (a big snuffle).

SELF: 'No, nothing of that sort.'

CHILD: 'Then wot's the good o' readin' of it?' (The child comes near and seats herself by my side, swinging her legs to and fro. After a pause, and a good stare)—

CHILD: 'Are you a pretty loidy?'

SELF (inclined for a joke): 'I am considered the beauty of Brighton.'

CHILD (after a long look): 'Oh! *I* don't think so.'
SELF: 'I'm sorry for that.'
CHILD (still swinging her legs): 'I like your 'at.'
SELF: 'I'm glad you like something.'
CHILD: 'My mother 'as one jist loike it.'
SELF: 'Really?'
CHILD: 'Yes; she bought it for a shillin' in 'Igh Street.'

The frankness of the remarks greatly amused me. Suddenly the girl made a move to go, saying, 'Good-bye, loidy,' when I remarked, 'You are going home to dinner, I suppose.' She shook her lank hair, and replied in the same artless manner: 'No; I ain't got no dinner; never 'ave no dinner, 'cept on Sundays.' I began to get interested in the poor little waif, and inquired further: 'No dinner except on Sundays?'

CHILD: 'No, loidy.'
SELF: 'A good tea, I dare say.'
CHILD: 'Only dry bread. Mother can't give us no butter.'
SELF: 'If I gave you a penny, what would you do with it?'
CHILD (with a look, not being able to realize the possibility of such a gift): 'I would buy a bun' (a loud and prolonged snuffle).

I gave the child money, and she rapidly disappeared in the direction of the shops. Coming hurriedly back, she seated herself on the beach by the side of her ragged playmate, with whom she shared her bun; I was touched by the instinct to divide her treasure with her poor companion. The child had some dinner, and we became very good friends in the future.

This case of real poverty reminds me that I am, like others, frequently accosted in the streets by professional beggars, and often I cannot resist the temptation of indulging in a little cross-examination, more especially when I have reason to believe that the mendicant is a sham. One day I was walking with a friend, when a boy, whose begrimed face wore the imploring expression which is so common amongst street beggars, and which gives them all a certain resemblance, addressed me without any hesitation (his speech naturally having had a very long run): 'Please, mum, a halfpenny, mum. So 'ungree, mum. Ain't 'ad nothink to heat since yesterday mornin', mum. Do, mum; I'm a poor horfun, mum.' 'Poor boy! An orphan?' 'Yes, mum.' 'Dear me! Where do your father and mother live?' 'In Queen Street, mum!' (*Exit.*)

During another walk I was addressed by a humble but apparently respectable woman, who, I must confess, succeeded in completely taking me in, for she did not ask for alms. She was a Frenchwoman, and spoke to me in her native tongue: 'Madame, veuillez m'indiquer la route pour Finsbury Square?' I directed her as well as I could, seeing that we were standing in Portland Place; and as she left me she gave a piteous sigh and walked slowly along. It occurred to me that she possibly was trying to get to some friends, and had not the means to take omnibus or cab, so I offered her

some money, which, after well-acted surprise, she accepted with a profusion of thanks. Six weeks afterwards I met the woman again, but not recognising *me*, she asked the same question, to which I replied, to her evident confusion, 'Comment! Vous ne l'avez pas encore trouvé?'

One more story of mendicity, and I will leave my indigent friends to play out their dramas undisturbed by me. This is an incident quite opposite in character, one of those sad cases which touch the heart very deeply; but, painful as it is, there is a tinge of serio-comic in the tale at which, while sympathizing with the cause, one cannot resist a smile. A lady of culture, reduced to the last stage of penury, and driven by hopeless despair to beggary, having tried everything in the shape of work to keep body and soul together, was, at last, forced by cruel fortune to a state bordering on distraction; she cared not for herself, but her baby boy cried for food, and something must be done. Being at her wits' end, she conceived the idea of going round to the various houses in the hope of selling muffins; she hid her face as best she could, and, under the shelter of a dark night, started on her weary errand. The poor lady wandered from street to street, stopping to gaze down at the kitchen windows, but could not for the life of her summon up courage to ring the muffin-bell. At length, made desperate by the remembrance of her baby boy, she *did* gently ring it, whispering feebly over an area gate, '*Muffins!*' The very sound of the bell, and of her own voice, frightened her, and she clung to the railings, muttering under her breath, 'Merciful heaven! I hope they didn't hear it!'

When her little son grows up to manhood, may his devotion to his mother repay her for the indignity she suffered for his sake!

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

Peril was the first play of which we gave a series of *matinées*, on alternate Saturdays, for some weeks, and so opened out a distinct source of income for future successful plays. We also, at this time, had the idea of instituting occasional morning performances of programmes distinct from the evening attractions, and, with this view, rehearsed an amusing comedy called *Husbands*, founded on Sardou's *Papillonne*, by Mr. F. Waller. The principal parts were to have been taken by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and myself; but the heavy scene of the hall in *Peril* so blocked up the stage that for a time, at any rate, we abandoned the intention. It was proved, however, at the Court Theatre, a year or two later, to be a valuable method of trying plays. Among those produced there in this way were the *Ladies' Battle*, and another version of *Le Fils de Famille*, which, by the way, I christened the *Queen's Shilling*.

I heard at this time that Sardou was about to produce a new play at the Théâtre du Vaudeville called *Dora*, and, mindful of the great success which was still attending the performance of our

version of *Nos Intimes*, made plans to be *en rapport* with the *première*. My part in *Peril* was too important to allow me to give it up so early in the run, but I was represented in Paris by Mr. B. C. Stephenson. He returned extremely nervous as to the new play's chance of success in England, although much impressed by one or two of its scenes. I pursued the matter further, on the strength of a criticism I read in a French newspaper, and found that the author had already sold the English and American rights to a theatrical agent, a Monsieur Michaelis, with whom I treated, inducing him to give me the refusal of the play until Ash Wednesday, which was fast approaching, when I promised to go to Paris and see the play. This was all settled, and I went over, accompanied by Mr. Kendal, who accepted my invitation for companionship.

We saw the play; at the end of the famous *scène des trois hommes* I went to Michaelis and told him I had seen quite enough, whatever the rest of the play might prove to be, to determine me to give him a cheque at the end of the performance, if he would join Kendal and myself at supper at a little English club, in the Chaussée d'Antin, I then belonged to, but which has since known 'plunging' days at baccarat, and is now no more.

Another fine scene followed in a subsequent act, and I felt assured there was ample material for a play in England, whatever the difficulties of transplanting it from Gallic soil might be, and gladly gave Michaelis fifteen hundred pounds, which was then by far the largest sum ever paid for a foreign work, for his rights, returning after a cheery supper to our hotel quite contented with my bargain.

Soon afterwards we placed the manuscript in the hands of Clement Scott and B. C. Stephenson for consideration as to the line to be taken in its adaptation, with whom, as was our custom with all French plays, we worked in concert. A long time was spent in deciding the plan before the work was begun. This gives me a brief pause to speak of other matters I have to tell.

In February a complimentary performance was given at the Gaiety Theatre to the accomplished entertainer, John Parry, who then took his farewell of the public and appeared for the last time before an audience, which comprised most of the notabilities of the day. He was much affected by the warmth of his reception, and it was some moments before his fingers proved that they still retained their marvellous power over the piano. Fortunately for the public and his 'troops of friends,' Corney Grain has since proved at least an equal master of the rare and difficult art of amusing large assemblies single-handed; while he in his turn has been followed by the accomplished George Grossmith.

In this month also Mrs. Bancroft, as she was still not acting, gave a reading in public for the first time; the subject chosen was the death of Jo, from *Bleak House*, the object being to aid the funds

of the Rev. Edward Ker Gray's church, St. Michael's and All Angels, at Notting Hill.

That distinguished actor, Henry Compton, owing to a long illness, so severe as to rob the public for ever of his services, and make it impossible for him to act again, was offered by his brother actors a complimentary benefit. A very representative committee was formed, and a performance organized which proved one of the most successful ever known. The result from all sources, I believe —including a performance in Manchester, where Compton had long been an especial favourite—reached the large sum of five thousand pounds. At one of the committee meetings, a suggestion I made was approved of, that the first act of *Money* would offer a good opportunity for a fine cast, including the veteran actor, Benjamin Webster, if he could be prevailed upon to appear for the event in his original character of Graves, which he had created at the Haymarket nearly forty years before.

Failing Irving as Alfred Evelyn, who did not like to take a part new to him under such circumstances, and pleaded also as further excuse, in a letter to me, the nightly labour of appearing as the Thane of Cawdor, the committee, I remember, was indebted to Mr. W. S. Gilbert for the admirable proposal that young Mr. Compton should be asked to make his first appearance in London on the occasion as Evelyn, and so give the opportunity to many old friends of showing their regard and affection for his father by taking the minor parts in support of the son. I give this interesting extract from the gigantic programme that was presented at Drury Lane on the morning of March 1st, Lord Lytton's comedy being cast as follows: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Henry Neville; Sir John Vesey, Mr. Hare; Sir Frederick Blount, Mr. Kendal; Graves (his original character), Mr. B. Webster; Stout, Mr. David James; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. Edward Compton (his first appearance in London); Sharp, Mr. William Farren; Servant, Mr. Bancroft; Lady Franklin, Mrs. Bancroft; Georgina Vesey, Miss Ellen Terry; Clara Douglas, Mrs. Kendal.

The selection from *Money* having been suggested by me, I was asked to play Sir Frederick Blount, a part which I had acted for so long a time; but I thought that former leading members of the old Haymarket Company, with which Compton had so long been connected, had the first claim to be associated with his name on such an occasion, so urged that the character should be offered to Mr. Kendal, and proposed to appear myself as the servant who makes the announcements of the names of those who attend the reading of the will. When I entered, carefully liveried and powdered, I was warmly received by the audience, who burst into loud and general laughter as I announced 'Sir Frederick Blount,' I being more or less identified with that eccentric personage myself.

Webster—who was then nearly, if not quite, eighty, and whose

last appearance on the stage I think this was—we had noticed to be in a very infirm state at the one rehearsal he attended, for he had kindly consented to appear. When he came to the wing dressed for the performance, I saw plainly how feeble he was. As his cue approached, he suddenly clung to me in a terror-stricken way, and said with emotion, 'Oh, my dear boy, where am I? I'm very frightened: I don't remember what I have to do.'

I was greatly pained, and dreaded some catastrophe. Fortunately the once famous old actor, whom it was sad indeed to see so shattered, had but a few words to say. I endeavoured to cheer him, and putting my arm round him, said gently, 'It's all right, Mr. Webster; you remember Mrs. Bancroft, don't you?' 'Remember Marie? of course I do.' 'Then, sir, you've nothing to fear: she will come to you and look after you directly you step upon the stage.'

I had to reassure and talk to him in this way as the cue came nearer and nearer for me to announce him. I told him how and when to follow me; he gave me a last sad, wistful look, and then obeyed me like a little child. After the applause which welcomed the great comedian of days gone by had died away, which he had lost the art of acknowledging, but stood as if in a dream, Mrs. Bancroft gently took her place by the old man's side, as her part allowed her to do, and helped him through the lines he had to speak.

We never met again; but a few days later, in answer to an inquiry with regard to our forthcoming revival of *London Assurance*, I received the following letter from Mr. Webster, written, although very tremblingly, in his own hand:

'Royal Adelphi Theatre, *March* 21, 1877.

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—Pray pardon my not having written to you before, but a nervous attack to my right hand prevented me. *London Assurance* was mine ever since it was written.

'The plot was originally John Brougham's, for which Vestris made Boucicault give him half the proceeds; so, between one and the other, I paid very dearly for it. With kind regards to you and Mrs. Bancroft, I am, yours faithfully, B. WEBSTER.

S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

A few weeks afterwards Webster presided as Master at the annual dinner of the Drury Lane Fund, which was held at Richmond, when he startled the assembled company by asking them to drink to '*The King*.' The old actor's memory had grown feeble, and he was living in the far-off past. What else I have to say of this 'light of other days' shall be written when I reach the date of his death.

Clement Scott's 'fireside story,' as he called it, *The Vicarage*, was to be played conjointly with Dion Boucicault's comedy, *London*

Assurance (produced originally, by the way, the year I was born, 1841), which, with the author's consent, I had arranged in four acts. Boucicault was in America at the time, and sent me his sanction from Chicago in these words :

'Your shape of *London Assurance* will be, like all you have done at the Prince of Wales's, unexceptionable. I wish I could be there to taste your brew.'

Both pieces were carefully rehearsed long before we needed them, for *Peril*, had we chosen to keep it in the bills, would easily have run through the season ; as, however, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal had country engagements in the autumn, and we had decided to produce Sardou's new play in the following January, we resolved on the change at Easter. I gave up my part of Sir George Ormond for the last three nights, and went to Paris with the adaptors to again see *Dora*, and settle, finally, further details of its treatment for England. Hare and John Clayton travelled by the same train for a short holiday—it being Passion week—and a pleasant time we all passed in the gay city more or less together. I remember well how we all roared over one of the earliest performances of *Bébé* at the Gymnase, afterwards adapted with amazing skill by F. C. Burnand as *Betsy*. In a *coupé* between Paris and Boulogne on our journey home, the whole subject of the new play was well thrashed out between myself and fellow-workers, and we saw our way to what eventually became *Diplomacy*.

The change of programme took place in accordance with the following announcement : On Saturday, March 31st, 1877, for the first time, *The Vicarage*, by Mr. Saville Rowe, founded on the French of M. Octave Feuillet. The Rev. Noel Haygarth, Mr. Arthur Cecil ; George Clarke, C.B., Mr. Kendal ; Mason, Mr. Newton ; Mrs. Haygarth, Mrs. Bancroft. Afterwards, revised by the author, and to be played in four acts, Mr. Dion Boucicault's comedy, *London Assurance* (for the first time at this theatre). Sir Harcourt Courtly, Mr. Arthur Cecil ; Charles Courtly, Mr. Kendal ; Mr. Harkaway, Mr. Teesdale ; Mr. Spanker, Mr. Kemble ; Mr. Dazzle, Mr. Bancroft ; Mark Meddle, Mr. George Honey ; Cool, Mr. Sugden ; Simpson, Mr. Newton ; Martin, Mr. Stuart ; Lady Gay Spanker, Mrs. Kendal (Miss Madge Robertson) ; Grace Harkaway, Miss Carlotta Addison (Mrs. La Trobe) ; Pert, Mrs. Bancroft.

NOTES BY M. E. B.

It may be interesting to note here that this was the first play-bill in which my name appeared without the prefix or addition of 'Marie Wilton.'

The double programme of *The Vicarage* and *London Assurance* was not over until very late on the first night, and greatly accounted for the extraordinary silence in which the curtain finally fell. But I shall never forget the effect it had upon all concerned. Mrs.

Kendal was amazed; it seemed to take away her breath, and after a long look of surprise, first at one person and then at another, she exclaimed, '*Well!*' Mr. Kendal remarked, 'What does it mean?' Mr. Cecil observed, 'That's funny!' to which Mr. Bancroft replied quietly, 'I don't see where the *fun* comes in—it's deuced puzzling!' There they all stood, just as the curtain had closed them in, with an expression of blank wonder on every face—*sans* applause, *sans* call, *sans* everything! Eventually Mr. Bancroft followed me to my room, and asked me what I thought. Was it a failure? The comedy went well throughout until the very end—then utter silence! What could it forebode? After several conjectures, and many a long pause to reflect, he took up my tumbler of lemon and water, emptied it, and retired to his own room, leaving me minus my constant beverage during my work.

How little an audience knows what power it possesses! and how frequently it can deprive a manager of a night's rest—nay, *several!*

This remarkable occurrence was the topic of our conversation all the next day; but our hearts were made easy by the good old comedy proving a great success until the end of the season, and Mrs. Kendal fairly revelled in the character of Lady Gay.

With regard to my own share in *London Assurance*, I fear that in the second act, to which the appearance of the small part of Pert is limited, I can riot in the desire to augment its value. Pert is a smart lady's-maid who has but a very short scene, but which in the course of a few nights played double the time intended by the author, and I don't know what he would have said to the liberties taken with the text. The audience, however, laughed immoderately, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy it, so I must include them in my conspiracy. I well remember one night Mrs. Boucicault, who occupied a private box, was looking with amazement at my audacity, but at the same time laughing heartily.

The following paragraph in my own words, concerning *The Vicarage*, will not be without interest:

'When I played the Vicar's wife I had to deliver a particular speech which always affected me deeply—"God gave me a little child; but then, when all was bright and beautiful, God took His gift away," etc. The remembrance of the death of my own child was revived in these words. My mind was full of his image, and my tears came in tribute to his memory. I could not have stopped them if I had tried. The effect upon my audience was that not a heart amongst them did not feel with me. Their silence spoke volumes, and their tears told me of their sympathy.'

Spontaneous criticisms from fellow-workers are always delightful in every art, as was this kind expression from a veteran tragedian:

'Garrick Club, *May* 3, 1877.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Pray do me the favour to accept an old actor's warmest felicitations on your beautiful rendering of the

parson's wife in *The Vicarage*. A more perfect bit of quiet acting I have never witnessed. You must believe me sincere when I tell you it moved me even to tears—the delicate harmony of comedy and pathos awakened me to surprise and admiration. Having gratified my love for legitimate acting so much, you will not, I trust, refuse to accept the sincere and appreciative thanks of—Yours very faithfully, JAMES ANDERSON.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

In the spring of this year, on an evening passed at Lady Sebright's, we first met a lady whose name was destined soon to be known throughout the world—Mrs. Langtry. It may be interesting to recall my first impressions of one who leaped at a bound into extraordinary celebrity. I had lingered after dinner talking to a friend, not knowing that more people were coming later, and when I went upstairs again, Mrs. Langtry was standing in the middle of the drawing-room, very plainly dressed in black—one of a small group of people. I exclaimed at once to my companion, 'Who is that lovely woman?' We asked a generally well-informed man, who said, 'I am told she is a Mrs. Langworthy, or Lang—something; and that her father is the Dean of Jersey.' Mrs. Langtry, I believe, had been brought by one of Lord Ranelagh's daughters, now married to her brother, Mr. Le Breton, who practises at the English bar. After awhile I was presented by our hostess, and found the manner of this since celebrated woman as full of charm as were her looks. Later on, at Lord Houghton's and several other houses, we again met. Mrs. Langtry then was famous, with all the London world running at her heels; but this charm of manner never changed—a charm, it always seemed to me, as potent as her beauty.

The tide of success, which at this time remained unbroken, followed our new programme, and continued throughout the season, towards the end of which we resolved when we reopened in the autumn to play Tom Taylor's comedy, *An Unequal Match*, in conjunction with *To Parents and Guardians*, while the new Sardou play was being finally prepared. Although I was told by many good judges, including the late well-known musical critic of the *Athenæum*, Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, that *Dora* could not possibly be made successful in her English dress (Gruneisen adding that the only chance would be to set the play back to the Jacobite period), my faith remained unshaken, and I grew more and more anxious to get to work upon the venture. I am not a betting-man, but backed my judgment on this occasion to the price of several hats!

This was to both of us a year of much social enjoyment and the making of new friends, adding largely to the list of those who had made their names familiar to the world: to have known distinguished and eminent people is not the least of the many debts we owe to our work and to the stage. There needs no further allusion here, excepting, perhaps, to mention for the moment as he

follows the same calling as ourselves, delightful meetings—sometimes at our own table, sometimes in picnics on the Thames, which he dearly loved—with that accomplished actor and companionable friend Joseph Jefferson, of whom we hope to speak again.

As the season drew to an end, the mornings were occupied with rehearsals of *An Unequal Match*, which Tom Taylor read to the company, the play being somewhat altered from the printed book. As usual then, we closed the theatre on the first Friday in August, and on the following morning, without losing a single day, we started for the mountains.

A 'DRAMATIC CONTRAST,' BY MRS. BANCROFT.

As soon as I got on board the boat for Calais, feeling a breeze, I asked the usual question, 'What sort of a crossing shall we have?' On being informed, 'Oh, a beautiful crossing; a bit "lumpy," perhaps, mum, after yesterday's storm,' all those poor creatures (I am one of them) who suffer more or less from *mal de mer*, immediately prepared themselves for a private cabin, or a couch in the Chamber of Horrors, otherwise the ladies' saloon. Of course I was assured that the fresh air was safer for me; but as all the cabins were taken, I urged that, much as I disliked it, I would go downstairs, 'for' I added, 'I do not look my best when I'm ill.' We had noticed, when we embarked, a very pretty girl with a tall good-looking man, who was most attentive to her, watching her affectionately, like a faithful dog. We remarked aside, 'A newly married couple!' The bride was conscious of being observed, for many eyes were gazing at her; she seemed abashed, and almost inclined to apologize for getting married. I had secured my couch, and was resigned to a 'lumpy crossing,' for we had no sooner started than the boat began to roll and pitch, and I felt thankful that I had wisely prepared for the worst. Presently down came the little bride, followed by her young husband, who anxiously asked the stewardess if 'his wife' could have a couch. 'Certainly,' was the reply, as she pointed to one on the opposite side to mine. The bride sat down, and the husband cheered her with assurances that she would not be ill. 'Now, dearest pet, make up your mind that you are *not* going to be ill, and you *won't*. Your Regy will run down every now and then to have a peep at you.' Then, turning to the stewardess, he said, 'Kindly look after "my wife," won't you?' 'Certainly, sir.' After a little whispering close enough to the ear to slyly kiss it, and a pause on the steps to throw a long, tender glance at 'his wife' before leaving her, he went away. In a few moments the newly-made wife called the stewardess, and asked whether she might occupy a couch she saw vacant on my side of the saloon, which she thought preferable to her own. She was conducted to it, at once closed her eyes, and prepared for sleep. Soon afterwards a middle-aged lady, and somewhat plain, came down. She was shown to the sofa just vacated by the bride, and

lay down immediately, covering herself with a travelling-cloak which chanced to be similar to that worn by the other lady. In about half an hour the bridegroom crept carefully down the steps, as if he had no right there, to have a peep at his brand-new wife. Seeing that all was tranquil and the stewardess idle, he retired noiselessly. The middle-aged lady had turned her face to the wall, and was asleep. By-and-by 'Regy' returned, and ventured closer to the couch. He sat down, and said in the softest tone, 'Is my pet one all right? she *has* been a brave girl indeed! We shall soon be there, darling. Courage, little one! your *husband* is here!' Then he took out of a lovely new travelling-bag a bottle of eau-de-Cologne and sprinkled her wrap with it, filling the close atmosphere with delicious perfume, at the same time saying encouragingly, 'Soon there now, dearie—soon there now. Who said she would be ill? Brave little wife! and who loves his little girl, eh?' Then more eau-de-Cologne, some of which must have gone into the poor lady's eyes, for she woke with a start and sat bolt upright. When 'Regy' saw her face, he dropped the bottle and bolted up the steps as fast as he could run, stumbling over the brass-bound edges of them on his way. (I would have given worlds to have laughed outright, but I dared not move—I was not good sailor enough!) A sudden cessation of the ship's bad behaviour told us we were near the end of our journey, and the ladies began to make a move to collect their things.

The bewildered young husband ventured cautiously down again, looking anxiously about for his wife, and seeing her seated on the opposite side, went over to her, but not without casting an abashed and uneasy glance at the middle-aged lady. I heard an explanation going on between the just-wedded pair, and the young bride crossed to where the other poor lady was sitting to recover her eau-de-Cologne. She apologized for her husband's behaviour, upon which the middle-aged lady remarked, 'Oh, not at all, not at all! I was asleep until your husband spoke, but when I heard his words, I knew it was a mistake, for it is many years since my husband has spoken like that to me.' There was pathos in this.

When we got on deck, we found ourselves in harbour. We were much crowded, and while waiting at the gangway I heard the young husband say in an undertone, 'Was my pretty flower ill? Did the little wifie suffer at all?' At the same moment the gruff, brusque, harsh voice of the other lady's husband said in a loud tone, 'Were you sick, Eliza?' During our journey these new and old married couples must have fraternized, for when we got out at Brussels we saw them, all four, dining together. Afterwards the two ladies went for a little stroll in the town, having still time at their disposal. They lingered too long, however, and the husbands became, one extremely anxious, and the other wild with impatience; the one in terror of 'anything having happened to the darling wifie,' the other stamping with rage and muttering, 'Oh, these women

and their infernal shops!' Presently there was a general commotion, and travellers were taking their seats—still no sign of the two ladies. The husbands rushed up and down the platform, asking everybody if the wives had been seen. 'En voiture!' cried the guard. Where on earth can they be? At length the ladies appeared in the distance running like mad. The bells rang, the engine whistled, and all was bustle and confusion. The bridegroom assisted his young wife tenderly into the carriage, saying, 'Oh, my angel! where were you?' The older married man angrily exclaimed, as he hoisted his middle-aged wife up the steps with a tremendous push, sending her parcels flying before her, 'Where the devil have you been, Eliza?'

BY S. B. B.

It was in this year that we first went to the Engadine, and commenced our great attachment for the beautiful valley. We rested on our way at Coire, and there engaged an excellent carriage and friendly coachman to go in two easy days to Pontresina by the Albula Pass. Needless to dwell on the ever-changing beauties of the drive, which year by year grow more and more familiar to the traveller; needless to tell of the grandeur of the Bergünerstein, or how, soon afterwards, fertility changes to sterility as the zigzags decrease, and the barren summit of the pass is slowly reached—a strangely weird and desolate waste that might have suggested many a background to Gustave Doré, and seemed fit only to be peopled by the creatures of his great imagination. We stayed a brief month at Pontresina, and soon learned to love the simple little village which slumbers in the valley of the Inn, six thousand feet above the sea. The wonderful restorative effect of its pure dry air upon those whom it suits, alone would make hard-worked or brain-worn people grateful to it. We had now a little extended the length of our holiday, closing the theatre for eight weeks; this gave us time for a short run to the Tyrol. We drove in four days to Botzen: on the first to Tirano, then to the Baths of Bormio, from which resting-place, on the next day, Mrs. Bancroft accomplished the feat of walking to the summit of the wonderful Stelvio Pass, the highest considerably in Europe. We then drove to a rough halting-place called Spondinig, and as we descended the pass, our coachman pointed out the spot made famous by the recent De Tourville trial for murder. On the fourth day we rested for lunch at Meran—a most picturesque town, reminding one greatly of 'The Rows,' as they call the arcades at Chester, and greatly frequented for the grape-cure—and in the evening arrived at Botzen, where the church-bells seem to never cease from ringing. At our hotel we had an amusing meeting with Mr. David James, who, having been on a walking tour, had grown a heavy dark beard, which greatly changed his appearance, and enabled him to maintain a joke at our doubts as to his identity. Later on we walked to the gaol where De Tourville was waiting his sentence,

and the prisoner was pointed out to us taking exercise, while guarded, up and down a room. Then we bought grapes as big as walnuts, and melons fit for prizes, at a cost of very small coins, in the pretty market-place.

We left the quaint old place by train over the Brenner Pass for Innsbruck. It was a year of heavy floods, and rumours had reached us that the line had been blocked through landslips caused by the torrents. After careful inquiry at the station, we were told we could safely make the journey, and that the rails were clear. This was a deliberate misstatement, as we found to our cost at noon, when the train was brought to a halt at a little village called —its name, indeed, is a sort of Calais on our hearts—Gossensass. There we learnt that gangs of men were working on the blocked line to remove the vast masses of earth which stopped the way for more than three parts of a mile, where the engineering qualities of the railway were most remarkable. We were told we should very likely be detained two hours, so soon we thought it best to storm the village inn, and see what could be done in the way of food, all that we had with us of the kind being a solitary melon, the remnant of our marketing at Botzen. It turned out to be a fête-day, picturesque to see, but terrible to us in its results, for hunger in its most ravenous form must have beset the natives, whose early dinner, aided by the passengers of a train blocked before the one we travelled by, had simply cleared the village larders, and left nothing eatable to be got for love or money. For a time this mattered little, but as the day wore on and our delay was hour after hour prolonged (while further trains were imprisoned in our rear), the pangs of hunger asserted themselves, and added to our sufferings. The stationmaster was so besieged, and found himself so unable to answer the shoals of questions by which he was assailed, that at last, in despair, he destroyed his identity by removing his tell-tale red cap. After all, we were travelling for our pleasure, and the inconveniences we put up with were small indeed compared with the anguish we saw endured by a traveller who had been summoned by telegraph from Vienna to a sick-bed ; the despair of a commercial person at some important difference the delay would cause in his affairs ; and the moans and cries of starving animals and fowls, packed in trucks or cooped in pens, regardless of all humanity, but stacked like sandwiches, and now without food, or drink, or standing space, but crowded on each other, and fighting in the heat for every inch of breathing-room. In answer to their appealing looks, all we could do was to give the wretched birds the rind of the melon we had just eaten. This miserable offering provoked a sudden flutter of excitement, which in their eagerness caused the poor suffering things to be all mixed up in a distorted way, that would have been funny under other circumstances.

For more than seven hours were we thus kept at Gossensass. Darkness had fallen, and with it heavy rain, until at last we began

to think how best we could get through the night. We were fortunate in the fellow-occupants of our compartment, a French *pasteur* and his two daughters, who were also going on to Innsbruck, when, to our relief, the word came down the Pass—the accident having befallen us at the steepest incline of this wonderful piece of railway—that it was cleared enough for trains on our side to ascend a little, while the blocked trains on the other side came down. When this was done the wretched passengers, travel-worn and weary, were transferred on foot, climbing as best they could by the light of lanterns and of torches for a distance of some hundreds of yards, and in the drenching thunder-storm, over the fallen *débris*, the luggage being dragged over the big boulders of rock and mounds of earth by the gangs of labourers, who looked like devils by the torchlight, grimed as they were with dirt, having been throughout the day and the past night at work to clear the way. The task was not an easy one, but was in time safely accomplished. The trains from the Austrian side, when reladen, returned to their starting-point, and *vice versâ* with those that met them from the contrary direction. The fate of the wretched cattle in the trucks and the cooped-up fowls we never knew, but Time does not efface our remembrance of this journey. When at last we reached the train for Innsbruck, we hoped our woes were over; but we had not long started, when we halted in a tunnel. There was an appalling silence for a time; presently we learnt that we had left half our train behind us, and the engine in the rear had gone to pick it up. Afterwards we must have slept from sheer exhaustion; for we remember nothing, until cries reached us of 'Innsbruck! Innsbruck!' when we felt, 'No, no! there *is* no Innsbruck, there never *was* an Innsbruck, there never *will be* an Innsbruck!' At one a.m., however, we did find ourselves—wet, tired out, and almost past hunger, but very thankful for our safety—in the Tirolerhof.

Of course during our brief stay we went to the old Franciscan Church, and saw the bronze monuments of Maximilian and the kings and queens surrounding him. We also drove to the famous Schloss all tourists go to see, but whether to our unlucky journey may be attributed our want of appreciation of the picturesque old town, we don't know; certain it is, we were glad to leave it after a short two days and go on to Salzburg. An incident with the *portier* of our hotel concerning our departure seemed to us amusing. In answer to a question as to how long it would take to get to Salzburg, he replied, 'Four hours was the former time, but that a new line of railway had just been opened by which we should be able to travel.' 'And how long by that?' 'Seven hours and a half!' Further inquiries informed us that the longer journey was passed through more beautiful scenery than the old line traversed, and the *portier* thought us poor creatures indeed when we decided to be contented with the beaten track and run no further risk of landslips.

Pleasant days followed at the Hôtel de l'Europe, Salzburg, surely as prettily placed as any town or city need be. There we came across friends, and with them went down the salt-mines of Berchtesgaden. The experience was then a strange one—very likely now more cockneyfied, through the vast increase of tourists. Crossing the subterranean lake, with its faint glimmer of light just revealing the forms of shadowy-looking creatures who rowed the boat, could not fail to call up mental pictures of the Styx. We then drove on to the lovely Königs-See, and when afterwards we told Count Beust how near we had been to his villa above its deep-green waters, he kindly regretted that we had not sought his hospitality.

Our experiences at the salt-mines were thus related in a letter written by Mrs. Bancroft:

'Hôtel de l'Europe, Salzburg, *Tuesday* (*September*, 1877).

'MY DEAR ——,—We have been very like children during this holiday trip, so keen was our desire to see everything and to do everything. When we were told it was usual for visitors to pass under a waterfall, never mind the wetting, we must do it. We drove with the —— to Berchtesgaden, and went with them down the shaft some hundreds of feet below the earth, the sensation being as if we were sent flying to the lower regions, which were represented by the salt-mines. After we had crossed a black, silent lake, the border of which was feebly lit by faint glimmering oil-lamps, we mounted on a kind of wooden plank on wheels at the mouth of a long black tunnel, with a small bright star at the other end, which we were told was daylight, and through which we should pass into our own civilized world again. The ceremony we had to go through, and the costumes we were obliged to don before we could be admitted into the bowels of the earth, caused me much amusement (for the ludicrous side of things, if there is one at all, I am sure to detect). We were shown into separate apartments, where attendants were waiting to dress us. Our costumes were as follows: For the men, a suit of white linen over their own, a felt hat, and a leather apron, only not worn as one, as there were many shafts to descend quickly in a sitting position!

'The ladies wore a white linen jacket, very full trousers, to allow one's own dress to be tucked inside; a leather belt and small felt hat, with no brim, of saucepan shape. These linen suits are worn to prevent the salt from penetrating through one's clothes. This is all right enough when the lady's figure is slight, but when it happens to be somewhat corpulent, the effect under these circumstances is too comic. When we all emerged to cross the road in open daylight, for the purpose of entering the mouth of the pit, a lady, whose dimensions were, to say the least, bulky, made her appearance. The effect on me was instantaneous, and I laughed till I suffered positive pain. I was obliged to make her think that I was amused

at the general effect, and not at her in particular, or the explanation might have been a little unpleasant. But every time my eyes met her large presence, I could not resist laughing. While we were in the dark cavern of the earth, lit only by the dim lanterns which were carried by our guides, I, of course, was unable to see her distinctly, but I always knew when she was near, and could picture her in "my mind's eye." When we emerged again into daylight (covered thickly with salt—in fact, human beings well pickled), this female Falstaff met my gaze once more, and I went off again into such an ungovernable fit of laughter that I was pushed into my dressing-room, where I could give vent to it to my heart's content. I enclose a rough sketch of the lady's appearance.

'I shall write again from Paris.—Yours ever, M. E. B.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEASON OF 1877-78.

A strong company—Some applications for engagements—Production of *An Unequal Match*—*To Parents and Guardians*—Souvenir from Jefferson—His temperament and his acting—Finding a name for *Dora*—*Diplomacy* decided on—Mr. Ollier's offer—*Diplomacy* produced—A triumph—Letter from Sardou—*The Saturday Review*, Wilkie Collins, and Clement Scott on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's parts in the play—A penalty of success: Burnand's *Diplunacy*—Letter from Fanny Kemble—Benefit performances for John Clarke and Mrs. Mellon: Madame Celeste's last appearance—Death of Charles Mathews—Pierre Berton: letter from him—An altered cast—Away to the mountains again—A stammering tenor—The enraptured doctor—Letter from Jenny Lind—A reading at Pontresina—An adventure: lost on the mountains—Death of H. J. Montague—Meeting with Fanny Kemble—Paris—The Exhibition—J. L. Toole in disguise—Introduction to Sardou—His house at Marly-le-roi—A practical joke.

EMBOLDENED by continued prosperity, as well as by friendly rivalry in management, to which for years we had been strangers, when, without disciples, we remained for so long a time in almost undisturbed possession of the field, we made still further engagements for this season, resolving, when it was no longer possible—through a greatly increasing *demand* by the side of which *supply* by no means ran at the same pace—to keep our company so much unchanged as in our earlier days, at least to replace any valued members of it, whose services we might lose, regardless of cost to our treasury. The salary list became, in fact, for so small a theatre, remarkable; the little house, however, seemed to bear a charmed life, as we were legislating only for success.

Prince of Wales's Royal Theatre.—Lessees and Managers, Mr.*

* This was the first time my name appeared in the play-bills in this capacity, as, for a long time, we shared Joey Ladle's objection to 'change the name of the firm.'—S. B. B.

and Mrs. Bancroft.—Season 1877-78.—Mr. Kendal, Mr. John Clayton, Mr. Sugden, Mr. Kemble, Mr. Flockton, Mr. Teesdale, Mr. W. Younge, Mr. Deane, Mr. Newton, Mr. C. Strick, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and Mr. Bancroft; Mrs. Kendal, Miss Litton, Miss Le Thiere, Miss Kate Phillips, Miss Lamartine, Miss A. Wilton, Miss Ida Hertz, Miss Lee, and Mrs. Bancroft.

Although our company comprised this strong list of names, we had further opportunities of adding to it, as the following amusing applications will show:

'HONNERED LADY,—i was borne in allen Street and i am now pottman at the swan with 2 neks i have no art to continue in my persision so i writ to arsk you to putt me on the bords of your theatre i am a borne actor for I citch myself makeing speaches out of plays in the middel of the nite if you will give me the charnce I will do my duty well and be a creditt to your theater if you see your way to give me the charnce i must arsk you to say nothink of it to my famly yours truly humble servent—HENRY ———.'

'to Mr. Bangkroft—DEAR SIR—could you be so kind as to teake noites of Ellen ———'s letter wich i took the libty of writing asking you if you could for kindly infrom har How she Could become a Balled gril as i have a longing disire to become one hopeing you will excuse the libty of troubilleng you i remaine your obedint Servent ELLEN ———.

'wery tall age 19.'

'DEAR LADY,—I hope you will pardon me for troubling you but if "you" will kindly read what "I" have got to say; you will perhaps, think, that I am justified in writing. I am twenty-two years of age, and have been for a considerable time studying for the stage. I am not merely stage struck; but possess those qualifications which must inevitably raise me to its highest "step"; which is "that" of expressing extreme passion. I have applied to several theatre's but all in vain. But I sincerely hope that you will not follow their example, and "also" help to rescue me from the poverty and insult to which I have been exposed these last few year's. I have not been accustomed to an audience, therefore I should like a few subordinate character's till I regain confidence, once more I ask you kindly to do what I ask and you will be repaid in a manner you little dream of.—I am yours JOHN ———.'

'SIR,—Pleese pardon me for taking the liberty but it is on account of myself wishing to be an Actress I feel I never shall be happy until I am one and I can assure you I will not be long lerning what I have to lern. I can jump about, but I am only just beginning to lern dancing, they tell me I am like a frog jumping about I am 17 years old and big for my age when I was 15 I played with

other girls at pretending to be circus girls I can sing pretty well this writing look something dreadful but I am writing it at work and I am in a hurry your Respectly—ETHEL ———.'

'SIR,—I am a young man age 20 my hight is 5ft 7in light weight (Excuse the term please) very good looking and Nimble should like to get into your theatre I have a good strong Voice and a distinct plain and good pronyunciation Quick at learning parts I will Agree to any propisition you make I have friends of position in various parts of England shall do my best to please you all I ask in Return is to have an allowance just for the necessaries and would like to live on premises but be content with a Small room in the vicinity I beg the honour of Being yours

'obediently

'MR. FRANK ———.

'My dear sir I am of Course single do not Smoke or drink.'

'DEER SIR—'I have a grate desire to becume An actorist I have not Been on the stage before but ive allways wished to becume one I have Nither Father nor Mother I have too brothers that all the frends i have so I am in the world allone So if you or any one would take me I should be extreamly thankfull i have been in sirvice but its no good its seems if ive been made for the stage its allways in my hed and I am sure I would soon be a good actorist I went to the Princess and the door Keeper He told me to write to any of the mangers Sir i am not a Londer but yorkshire Girl i was 16 years old Last febuary

'i remain yours Respetfully M—— N——

'— hamstedd Road N.V.'

The hopes we entertained that the dramatic profession had somewhat risen in public esteem were a little dashed when we found they evidently were not shared by the 'famly' of the gentleman who was 'borne in allen Street,' to whom we did not 'see our way' to 'give the charnce' of appearing in the programme of Saturday, September 29th, 1877, when Tom Taylor's comedy, *An Unequal Match*, was first acted by us with this cast: Sir Sowerby Honeywood, Mr. Kemble; Harry Arncliffe, Mr. Sugden; Captain Chillingham, Mr. C. Strick; Dr. Botcherby, Mr. Arthur Cecil; John Grazebrook, Mr. Flockton; Blenkinsop, Mr. Bancroft; Tofts, Mr. W. Younge; Herr Dummkopf, Mr. Deane; Lady Honeywood, Miss Ida Hertz; Mrs. Montressor, Miss Litton; Miss Leech, Miss Lee; Bessy Hebblethwaite, Miss Kate Phillips; Hester Grazebrook, Mrs. Bancroft.

The play not only added a considerable sum to the treasury, but ran pleasantly until the end of the year, and throughout the preparation of Sardou's new work, which was definitely announced for production in January, until which date the Kendals could not rejoin

us. The old farce, first made famous by Alfred Wigan and the Keeleys, *To Parents and Guardians*, the action of which Tom Taylor reduced at our suggestion, and with great advantage he considered, to a single scene, proved an excellent afterpiece. It gave Arthur Cecil an admirable part in the old French usher, while Henry Kemble quite revelled in the boyish troubles of the fat butt of the school, known to his playmates as Master William Waddilove.

It was at this time that Mr. Jefferson, who, had he not been so distinguished as an actor, might easily have made painting his profession—his pictures having been more than once shown in the Academy—gave us a charming souvenir from his brush of some happy days we had passed together, chiefly on the river, and often in the additional companionship of William Winter, an accomplished poet and critic, and also a fellow-countryman of his. The subject is a backwater on the Thames in the early haze—the *genre* being greatly that of the eminent French landscape painter, Corot.

Jefferson had lingered in the old country long after his engagements here were over, for he loved England and its people, and now was going home. The following letter was an answer to a wish that he would add, if possible, to the value we set upon his gift by writing his name on the canvas, which is quite important in size, although so modestly spoken of by himself:

'Brighton, *Thursday, September* 27, 1877.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I was sorry to find yourself and Bancroft from home when I called on Monday with the little sketch of the Thames. I am glad you like it.

'Many thanks for your kind and beautiful letter. I shall be in London on Sunday, and will call for the purpose of wishing you both good-bye, and to sign the picture as you request.

'Mrs. Jefferson joins me in love to you both, and we hope some day to see you in America.

'Always your friend and admirer, J. JEFFERSON.'

No man was ever more gifted with a poetic temperament than Jefferson. He loved nature. To linger on an old bridge, or wander in a country lane, would give him hours of happiness. Every leaf had its charm in his eyes, each blade of grass he would, as it were, photograph on his memory, parting with them regretfully, so 'loving-jealous' was he of their beauties. Once, after a long ramble near Cookham, he said, 'What a beautiful place is your bonnie England! How I should like to take it in my arms and carry it right away!' He was as popular in society as on the stage, and always charming in companionship.

A little story he told us of periodical visits to a certain theatre in his own country, either by himself or some other distinguished actor, we thought very touching in its simplicity. At this theatre the actor had for years taken some friendly notice of an old stage

carpenter and scene-shifter named Jackson, whose life had interested him, and who always got some substantial recognition when the engagement ended. This went on for years, when, on one occasion, the kind comedian looked about for the old man in vain. He searched the theatre well, but could not find him ; so at last he sent for the master-carpenter, and asked him where Jackson was. The man first answered the question with a sorrowful look, then simply pointing upwards, said quietly, 'I guess he's *shifting clouds*.'

It is impossible to recall more exquisite acting than Jefferson's in the character of dear, dissolute, gentle Rip Van Winkle. When this finished work of art first caused its sensation at the Adelphi, a solemn-looking man who was seated in the upper boxes read from his play-bill in an audible voice, 'Twenty years will elapse between the acts.' He then rose, took up his hat, and, bowing to his neighbour, said quietly, 'Sir, I wish you good-evening. Few present, I take it, will survive to see the end of this play.'

We wonder if America will lend its great artist to us again. We hope so, for few friendships are more valued by us than that of Joseph Jefferson.

Sardou's play had meantime fully occupied both us and the 'Brothers Rowe,' as they were called ; it was revised and revised, but at last approached completion. Only a careful comparison of the original manuscript with the English version would prove the labour it involved, and the tact and skill it required to retain just what was necessary from the French second act and incorporate it with the first. When the play was read to the company, each adaptor in turn taking an act, it produced a profound impression on everyone present. One lady, who was cast for a small part, when asked if she was interested in the story, replied, 'Interested ! if anybody had spoken to me, I must have slapped their faces !' Then there arose a tantalizing difficulty as to its title. Our dear friend Charles Reade reminded us of the existence of his play *Dora*, founded on Tennyson's poem, thinking if we retained the name that a wide field would be opened to pirates. We first decided to christen it *Blackmail*, but when we so advertised it, claim was laid to the title as belonging to an unacted play by the late Watts Phillips, who wrote so many admirable dramas for the Adelphi. We next thought, apropos of the last act, of the *Mousetrap*, again to find that some one had been beforehand ; eventually all the titles thought of were, one night at home, written on slips of paper and put into a hat. We decided that the one drawn oftenest in a given time should be resolved on. This chanced to be *Diplomacy*, which came out a long way ahead, and best of all, perhaps, fitted to the line we adopted in the play. The hero, a young sailor in the French, had become our military *attaché* at Vienna, while his brother (there was no kinship between these characters as Sardou left them) was to be First Secretary in our Embassy at Paris. Accident served us very much with regard to the political relations

between Russia and Turkey at the time, and the question of the Constantinople defences was a prominent one of the day. The scenes at Monte Carlo and Paris were elaborately prepared and decorated, although, we frankly admit, not so elaborately as to allow truth in the rumour that one suite of furniture had in the days of the Empress Eugénie formerly graced her boudoir in the Tuileries. Our desire for realism in the last act, which we laid in the *Chancellerie* of the British Embassy, induced a special visit to Paris for final details, for which every opportunity was given to us through the kindness of Mr. (now Sir Francis) Adams, who was then First Secretary, and our old friend George Greville, who, since we knew him as a boy at Scarborough, had entered the diplomatic service, and had become an *attaché* under Lord Lyons.

The rehearsals proceeded apace, and nothing in our career we thought more clearly foreshadowed success—a view which was strongly confirmed by our friend Mr. Pigott when he sent us the Lord Chamberlain's license for its performance.

DIPLOMATIC NOTES FROM S. B. B.'S DESPATCH-BOX.

In the first days of the new year, about a week before the play came out, I received a visit at the theatre from Mr. Ollier, one of the leading librarians in Bond Street, who said he wished to make a proposal with regard to the new production. Perhaps the interview that followed can be best related in dialogue ; which certainly shall reproduce its exact purport, if not the actual words of the conversation :

Mr. OLLIER : 'You have now over a hundred and twenty stalls in the theatre, Mr. Bancroft.'

Mr. BANCROFT : 'Yes.'

Mr. O. : 'The charge for which at your booking-office is ten shillings?'

Mr. B. : 'Yes.'

Mr. O. : 'Let us count them as a hundred and twenty, which, at ten shillings each, would be sixty pounds a night, if all of them were taken.'

Mr. B. : 'Exactly.'

Mr. O. : 'Sixty pounds a night is at the rate of three hundred and sixty pounds a week for six performances.'

Mr. B. : 'I follow you.'

Mr. O. : 'Well, Mr. Bancroft, from the night you produce *Diplomacy* until the middle of July will be about five-and-twenty weeks.'

Mr. B. : 'Yes, I think so.'

Mr. O. : 'Three hundred and sixty pounds a week for five-and-twenty weeks would be nine thousand pounds.'

Mr. B. : 'I don't know—haven't counted—but what are you coming to?'

Mr. O. : 'This. I am prepared to take every stall in the theatre,

at its full price, for six months, and to write you a cheque for the whole sum at this moment.'

Mr. B. (*after a pause*): 'You rather take my breath away, Mr. Ollier; but will you let me ask what prompts you to make such an extraordinary proposal?'

Mr. O.: 'Certainly. I have a great opinion of your judgment, and am simply prepared to back it. I can't recall a cast of any modern production with six such names as Mrs. Bancroft's and your own, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and Mr. Clayton. Added to which I know the play drew money in Paris, and I feel sure you know what you are doing.'

Mr. B.: 'I am, of course, very much complimented, believe me, by your proposal, and by what you say of me. I can do nothing, however, it seems to me, but thank you for the offer, and decline it.'

Mr. O.: 'Decline it! Why?'

Mr. B.: 'For one good reason. If the play should succeed, as you expect, you would have a monopoly of the stalls, and could put them at any price you like, leaving Mrs. Bancroft and myself to bear the natural anger of the public.'

Mr. O.: 'Well, Mr. Bancroft, I am sure you know your own business best; but I don't think in a long career I have met another manager who would have refused the offer. Anyhow, I wish you all the success you work so hard for, and many a long year of it. Good-night!'

Mr. B.: 'Good-night!'

The Friday night was devoted to a last rehearsal, which was considerably enlivened by Arthur Cecil, pursued as usual by his second self the Demon of Indecision, appearing in each of his scenes with a totally distinct 'make-up' for Baron Stein, and looking like some new character dragged into the play at the last moment, who was going to brighten it up by giving a sort of entertainment *à la Woodin*.

This was the programme of what proved to be one of the best trump cards of our twenty years' management:

On Saturday, January 12, 1878, *for the first time, will be acted a play in four acts, called,*

DIPLOMACY,

adapted for the English stage from M. Victorien Sardou's comedy '*Dora*,' *by Mr. Saville Rowe and Mr. Bolton Rowe.*

Act I.—'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence.'—*Byron.*

Act II.—'Mark now, how a plain tale shall put you down.'—*Shakespeare.*

Act III.—'But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more.
Farewell!'—*Tennyson.*

Act IV.—'What do you call the play?
The Mouse-Trap! Marry, how?'—*Shakespeare.*

COUNT ORLOFF	Mr. Bancroft.
BARON STEIN	Mr. Arthur Cecil.
MR. BEAUCLERC	Mr. John Clayton.
CAPTAIN BEAUCLERC	Mr. Kendal.
ALGIE FAIRFAX	Mr. Sugden.
MARKHAM	Mr. Newton.
ANTOINE	Mr. Deane.
MARQUISE DE RIO-ZARÈS	Miss Le Thiere.
COMTESSE ZICKA	Mrs. Bancroft.
LADY HENRY FAIRFAX	Miss Lamartine.
DORA	Mrs. Kendal.
MION	Miss Ida Hertz.

The play, from start to finish, was a triumph. Before I went upon the stage for the splendid 'three-men scene,' I told the prompter I was sure the applause would be tremendous at the end of it, and asked him when we answered the call to keep the curtain up a longer time than usual, I felt so certain of success. He more than obeyed me in his zeal, and I thought would never ring the curtain down again ; nothing, however, checked the salvos of applause and the roar of approving voices, for, again and again, the curtain had to be raised in answer to the enthusiasm, which, at the close of the fine scene between Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in the third act, was almost repeated. At the end of the play, in answer to an extraordinary ovation, which must live keenly in the memories of all who were present, and enthusiastic calls for the author, I announced that the news of the play's reception should at once be telegraphed to Monsieur Sardou, to whom the adaptors of his work wished all the praise to go. The next day we received a most gratifying and congratulatory answer.

In further acknowledgment of a little *cadeau* we ventured to send the distinguished dramatist, came this letter :

'Paris, le 21 *Février*, 1878.

'Cher Monsieur,—Pardonnez-moi le retard que j'ai mis à vous écrire. Je suis en ce moment accablé de travail ; répétant chaque jour de midi à cinq heures, écrivant toute la matinée, et le soir trop fatigué pour reprendre la plume.

'J'ai reçu avec un bien vif plaisir le charmant objet que vous voulez bien m'envoyer à titre de souvenir de la part de Mrs. Bancroft, et de la vôtre. Je suis on ne peut plus sensible à l'amicale pensée qui vous a conseillé le gracieux envoi, et vous a fait choisir l'objet de tous le plus propre à me rappeler sans cesse et le succès de *Dora* à Londres et la charmante urbanité de son directeur. Je ne fumerai plus désormais une cigarette, sans penser à tout cela, et le souvenir ne s'envolera pas avec la fumée.

'Priez Madame Bancroft de vouloir bien agréer mes salutations les plus empressées, et permettez-moi de vous serrer la main cordialement à l'anglaise.—Victorien Sardou.'

I may mention here that the part of Count Orloff perhaps gave me greater pleasure to act than any character I have ever played,

although it is confined entirely to the one great scene—hardly appearing in the first act of the play, and not appearing after the second. When I saw *Dora* originally, I felt the cast in regard to the Orloff to be faulty, and that the scene between the three men would gain if the part were given to an actor in whom the audience placed equal confidence with the representatives of the other two characters. To my thinking, in the big scene Orloff is the best part of the three, and calls for the greatest judgment in the acting.

A recent interesting discussion, provoked by one of the ablest of our dramatic critics, allows me to take occasion to say that tears never failed to come to my eyes at a fine moment requiring suppressed emotion when acting this character.

Apropos of this feeling towards the part of Orloff, it was pleasant to read the following words in the *Saturday Review*:

'Some time ago, when writing of the performance of *Dora* in Paris, we expressed a doubt whether adequate interpreters could be found for the great scene between the three men. We may as well say at once that we are delighted to find this doubt need not have been entertained.

'This scene, which no doubt is the one upon which the play depends, is played as admirably here as it was at the Vaudeville in Paris.

'Mr. Bancroft's performance in the scene as Count Orloff could hardly be improved, and his playing of the part throughout gives a fresh proof of Mr. Bancroft's fine power of impersonation, a thing somewhat different from acting in the loose sense which is too commonly attached to the word. The character demands an unusual capacity for indicating rather than expressing a passionate emotion, and in Mr. Bancroft's rendering of it we can find no fault.'

Equally delightful was the valued criticism of the ever sympathetic friend who wrote as follows:

'90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square, W., *January* 13, 1878.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—I went to the theatre with rheumatism in my back and in my knees, and I was (I need not say how unwillingly) obliged to get home to bed after seeing the first two acts of the piece only, but I saw enough to justify me in sincerely congratulating you and Mrs. Bancroft.

'You have won a great success, and you have most thoroughly deserved it. I have never seen you do anything on the stage in such a thoroughly masterly manner as the performance of your part in the great scene. Your Triplet was an admirable piece of acting, most pathetic and true, but the Russian (a far more difficult part to play) has beaten the Triplet.

'There was no mistaking the applause that broke out when you left the scene. You had seized the sympathies of the audience.

'Of the great success of the English *Dora* there is no manner of doubt, and I heartily rejoice in it.—Yours always truly, WILKIE COLLINS.'

From a too grateful letter, written by Mr. 'Saville Rowe,' I make an extract, and give him the responsibility of playing upon an instrument which I have tried to refrain from blowing myself.

'It was your strong intelligence and perception of dramatic effect, my dear Bancroft, that secured for playgoers such a work as this. Your assistance has made the "grand trio" the talk of the town, and your consummate judgment in arrangement and stage management are found in every scene and every group.

'The proudest day of my life was when I found myself associated, however humbly, with such a theatre as the Prince of Wales's.'

In the same letter he further writes :

'My own pen, necessarily forced to silence, longs to enter the literary arena to proclaim what I so sincerely feel. . . . As to Mrs. Bancroft, what higher compliment can any critic pay than those tears she commands at will? What higher artistic triumph can there be than to play such a character and wring from it every possible drop of sympathy? . . . One false note in such a harmony would have produced discord.'

I may here add that Mrs. Bancroft tried very hard to escape playing La Comtesse Zicka, and only yielded reluctantly to my strong persuasions. She always felt herself to be physically unsuited to the character, and was never happy in it, despite the great praise her performance evoked.

The *Saturday Review* (January 19, 1878), said :

'Mdlle. Bartet, promising though her acting was, did not approach the complete mastery and finish which Mrs. Bancroft shows in her playing of the Countess Zicka.'

The success of the play, which owed much to the acting of all concerned, on which it is hardly our province to dwell at length, passed all our experience. The crowds that congregated outside the doors every night were large enough to make several audiences, and had the theatre been twice its size, would have brought us quickly quite a fortune, for it was crowded to its utmost capacity in every part until July, seven times a week, as we gave an unbroken series of morning performances. The seats were secured in advance for a longer time than I ever heard of—months, not weeks—and it might well be wondered if the purchasers would ever be the

occupants. The first time the late Prince Imperial saw the play was from the dress-circle ; an example which many distinguished people followed rather than wait for stalls or boxes. Lord Beaconsfield, who rarely went to the play—his only previous visit to our theatre, when we were acting *School*, being recorded by himself in his last novel—came one night to see *Diplomacy*. On entering the stalls, where he sat, he was recognised by the audience, and received an immense ovation, he being then at the height of public favour. It was during this extraordinary career of success the fact became confirmed, which a year before had dawned upon us, that theatrical management might result in the means of retiring early from its cares.

One penalty we had to pay for the craze the success had grown to be. Mr. F. C. Burnand saw the play one night ; when the curtain fell he went straight home to his desk, and did not leave it until he finished a masterpiece of parody, which he called *Diplunacy*, and produced with all speed at the Strand Theatre.

Not only was the travesty immensely funny, but it was remarkably well played, the mannerisms and peculiarities of the actors being wonderfully seized by the burlesque company, whose members paid weekly visits to our *matinées* while their rehearsals were in progress. For our own parts, it was very amusing to 'see ourselves as others see us,' and we laughed as heartily at the good-natured caricatures of our peculiarities by Miss Venne and Monsieur Marius, as at the comic reproduction of Mrs. Kendal by Miss Rachel Sanger, or at Mr. Penley's grotesque imitation of the peculiarities of the Baron Stein. We forget who burlesqued Mr. Kendal, but Mr. Clayton suffered at the hands of Mr. Harry Cox (an original member of the first Prince of Wales's company, since dead). The penalty we paid for all this good fun was thus : it being easier to get seats for the burlesque than for the original, sometimes people, tired of waiting, would go to the Strand before seeing our play—a fatal thing to do—and try afterwards to take things *au serieux*. *Diplunacy* had a great and deserved success, and ran by our sides for many months.

An unpractised pen must sometimes beg pardon for not always being kept strictly to the point and sequence of the story it is made to tell, but we must not omit mention of a once distinguished member of our calling—Fanny Kemble—whom we had so often seen of late in the theatre, that we asked Mr. Henry Kemble, who was still a member of our company, although not acting in *Diplomacy*, if he would beg from his accomplished relative her autograph, that we might add it to a collection of some value and much interest. Our request brought this kind reply :

'15, Connaught Square, *April* 7, 1878.

'MY DEAR MADAM,—My nephew tells me that you have expressed a desire to possess my ugly and illegible handwriting.

Here it is! and I venture to avail myself of this opportunity of expressing how much I have enjoyed repeatedly the clever and admirably acted piece which is now succeeding so brilliantly at your theatre. "Old folks" are hard to please, and it is a good action to give them pleasure, and so I hope you will allow me to subscribe myself, my dear madam, your obliged servant, FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

'To Mrs. Bancroft.'

We here may take occasion to mention two benefit performances that were given at about this time, the first being to aid that old friend of ours and favourite of the public—John Clarke; the second on behalf of that distinguished actress, Mrs. Alfred Mellon. Both performances took place in the morning, and in the month of May. Clarke asked, and at once with great pleasure received, our permission to play *Society*, that he might appear once again as John Chodd, junior. Several leading members of our company, including 'Tom Stylus,' took part in the performance. Hare and Miss Larkin again appeared as Lord and Lady Ptarmigant; while many actors of distinction also came to his aid, and gladly took small parts in the celebrated 'Owl's Roost' scene, with its amusing five-shilling incident, which tended largely to make the performance of Robertson's comedy a marked success.

The chief incident in the other benefit, which took place at Drury Lane, was the appearance for the occasion (her last, I believe, upon the stage, which greatly added to our interest in being present) of her old friend and Adelphi comrade, Madame Celeste, who acted, with extraordinary verve and power, a scene from her once famous character of Miami in *The Green Bushes*.

Meanwhile, Sardou had produced another play at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, called *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*. We were represented at the first performance, but decided after careful thought that it would be dangerous to attempt a play for England from it. Pressed, however, to see it, and judge for ourselves, we arranged to do so. The hurried visit resulted in confirming our decision, and we again refused the play, notwithstanding the effect of its several powerful scenes.

On June 24th, the English stage lost one of its brightest ornaments by the death of Charles Mathews. The final visit this incomparable comedian paid to a theatre as a spectator, but a few weeks before, was to see *Diplomacy*, and this was the last time we ever saw him. He afterwards went upon a provincial tour, and on the journey by road from Staleybridge to Manchester he caught a chill, and after a brief illness died at the Queen's Hotel, in that city.

Charles Mathews was thirty when he went upon the stage, and yet lived to be, for more than forty years, one of the most beloved of the public's favourites. In a defence of himself, and the view he

took of his art, he once said, 'It has been urged against me that I always play the same characters in the same way, and that ten years hence I should play the parts exactly as I play them now; this I take as a great compliment. It is a precision which has been aimed at by the models of the profession, which I am proud to follow, and shows, at least, that my acting, such as it is, is the result of art and study, and not that of mere accident.' The name of Charles Mathews has appeared very often in this book, and now, alas! we write it for the last time.

Pierre Berton, whose aquaintance we had previously made, the *jeune premier* of the Paris Vaudeville and original representative of the lover in Sardou's play, came to London this summer and saw our performance. He promised, in the friendliest way, to make us known to Sardou, with whom he had long been intimate, when we passed through Paris, and shortly afterwards came this letter:

'St. Valery-en-Caux, *Lundi* (*July*, 1878), Seine Infre.

'MON CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,—Hier j'ai fait part à Sardou du grand plaisir que j'avais eu à voir représenter *Diplomacy*, et je lui ai raconté dans le plus grand détail l'excellente soirée que j'ai passée dans votre théâtre.

'Il sera très heureux de vous recevoir, ainsi que Madame Bancroft, lors de votre passage à Paris et me charge de vous le dire. Si donc vous voulez bien me prévenir un peu d'avance à l'époque de votre retour de Suisse je me ferai un véritable plaisir de vous mettre l'un et l'autre en relations directes.

'Permettez-moi de vous remercier encore de l'accueil cordial que vous avez bien voulu me faire, et croyez-moi, je vous prie,—Votre bien dévoué, PIERRE BERTON.'

We were now busy in several ways. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, not foreseeing the magnitude of the success which attended the production of *Diplomacy*, had contracted engagements in the country, which were to be filled in the autumn; when, by arrangement with us, they acted the play with great éclat in the leading cities. We had no intention to resign our holiday, so resolved to keep the theatre open, and get the best possible substitutes for those who had to leave the cast. Miss Amy Roselle and handsome Harry Conway were engaged for Dora and Julian Beauclerc, Miss Sophie Young for Zicka, and Mr. Forbes-Robertson for Count Orloff.

All this involved much rehearsal, which also had to be given to the members of a company formed for other provincial towns, so that we found our hands full until we left home for our holiday at the usual time.

The cast was then changed, and we received a telegram at Ragatz informing us of the success of the new-comers; but, of course, the season of the year, and the removal of so many prominent names from the programme, told upon the attendance at the

theatre, and the great crush to see the play was over. From Ragatz, where we visited the curious baths of Pfaeffers (which gave us the idea of being a squalid place to be condemned for a 'cure'), we drove in two days to Pontresina, travelling this year by the beautiful Schyn and Julier Passes, staying at Thusis long enough to go to the third bridge of the wonderful Via Mala, perhaps the gem of that kind of scenic beauty, before driving on to Tiefenkasten, where we rested for the night. On the next day we halted at quaint little Mühlen, which nestles in the heart of pine-clad hills, that in the winter only allow the sun to reach the village for about two brief hours of the day. After toiling up the pass, and before commencing to descend by the zig-zags to Silvaplana, we came upon the wondrous contrast presented by the view of the valley and its chain of lakes extending from Campher to the Maloja.

We passed a delightful month at Pontresina, where we had the happiness to become acquainted with the late Madame Goldschmidt, who, as Jenny Lind, had held the highest and proudest place in public affection and regard. We then had many cheery chats over early experiences, and many a laugh too; now we deeply deplore the sad affliction which recently befell those who loved her.

Mrs. Bancroft was indebted to Madame Goldschmidt for the following anecdote, which she told inimitably; but, maybe, in the attempt to write it much of its attractiveness will be lost.

The incident occurred during one of the provincial tours of the great 'Swedish Nightingale' and her operatic company. The tenor of the troupe stammered so painfully, that it was often very difficult to follow him, or to even guess his meaning, although when he sang, not a trace of his affliction could be observed.

One day they were about to start by train from one town for the next place on their list, and where they had to appear on the same evening. They were all, except the tenor, seated in the railway carriage, when suddenly the afflicted member of the company discovered, on looking into the luggage-van, that a certain black box, which carried the important part of their wardrobe, had been left behind. The train was on the point of starting, as the tenor, in a terrible state of excitement and anxiety, rushed up to the carriage where the others were seated, and stammered out:

TENOR: 'The b—b—b—b——'

BARITONE: 'What's the matter?'

TENOR: 'The b—b—b—b——'

BASSO: 'What is it, my dear fellow—what is it?'

TENOR: 'The bl—bl—bl—bl——'

BARITONE: 'Sing it, man, sing it, for mercy's sake!'

TENOR (*in recitative*): 'All I fear is lost!'

BASSO (*shouting*): 'What's lost?'

TENOR: 'I fe—ar—is lost!'

BARITONE (*getting nervous*): 'What do you mean, man? Go on!'

TENOR : 'The black box !'
BASSO : 'Yes—yes !'
TENOR : 'The black box !'
BARITONE : 'What of it, man—what of it ?'
TENOR : 'The black box has been for—got—t—en !'
ALL THE COMPANY (*jumping out*) : 'Oh, my goodness ! we shall have no clothes !'

A little incident connected with Madame Goldschmidt's visit to Pontresina caused great amusement to her, and immense gratification to another. One morning, quite early, Madame took advantage of the hotel visitors not being about, when, slipping into the drawing-room unobserved by anyone, she sat down at the piano and began to warble forth some exquisite music. The doctor of the village, who, of course, was an early riser, and busy paying his first professional visits, happened to be passing the door of the room at the time, and was at once attracted by her singing. He stopped, looked through the glass door, and, seeing who was there, could not resist turning the handle very softly, and entering the room without a sound. He sat behind a screen and 'feasted,' as he termed it, upon this accidental banquet of sweet voice-notes. He had never heard the great songstress in his life, and could not resist the temptation which offered itself to him. Madame Goldschmidt's back was turned in his direction, so that she could not see him, and for a short time unconsciously afforded the doctor a pleasure he said he should never forget. She was beginning afresh, when suddenly the door (which he had left slightly ajar, fearing to disturb her) creaked loudly ; she turned round, and seeing that she was not alone, closed the piano and left the room. The doctor felt sorry to have been the cause of her annoyance, but at the risk of even losing all his patients through keeping them waiting, said he could not help it.

Madame Goldschmidt was much amused when told of this adventure, and had she known who it was, would, doubtless, have pretended not to have seen the intruder, but have allowed him to continue his delightful dream. Dr. Ludwig vowed vengeance to the creaking door for a long time afterwards.

We print a letter received later on from this gifted and regretted lady :

'1, Moreton Gardens, South Kensington, *November* 15.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I am sorry to hear that your head still troubles you. I hope time and calmness will come to your help ; stage-work is so apt to disturb the *head*—the hurry, the anxiety one always is in on the "planks" (as we call the stage in my old country), makes the head to quiver and the sensitive nerves to quake.

'It is very kind of you to offer us a box, only, as you *always* can sell yours, it is rather a hard task to ask you to become a loser by us.

'But your kind offer, sincere as I know it is, has been fully appreciated by us.

'My young soldier is going to—*Sheffield;* and I *love* Sheffield just now (never did *before*), as India or the Cape would have been trying to him, as he has *not* been right.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Bancroft, yours sincerely, JENNY LIND GOLDSCHMIDT.'

During this visit, and for the benefit of the *Verschönerungsverein!* or Paths and Ways Improvement Society (of which we both hold diplomas as the only foreign members, and a mention of which distinction might look well on our visiting cards!), Mrs. Bancroft repeated her reading of the death of Jo, from *Bleak House;* the result was very gratifying, and allows her to think in many a walk, as she treads the well-made paths, how much she helped to make them. One path was made up what is called the Little Muotas, up which it is now a walk of about an hour and a half to the summit; but, of course, it took much longer some years ago, when an old lover of the Engadine and hardy climber, Sir Paul Hunter, strayed there one afternoon to read. Becoming engrossed in his newspapers, the time flew by; he found, when he began to retrace his steps, that the night was already falling, and soon he lost his way. Knowing that the descent would grow more and more dangerous, he wisely returned to the summit and made efforts to attract attention, either from some stray shepherd on the mountain or from people in the valley far below. Shouts were soon found to be of no avail, but placing newspapers, one by one, on the end of his alpen-stock, he set fire to them, and by this means made his plight known. He was answered from the village by a return fire that his signals had been seen, and then, with the companionship of his pipe, waited patiently for the rescue he now felt sure would save him from being benighted.

The news soon spread that guides had gone up the mountain to bring some one down in safety who had lost his way, and had been making signals of distress. Lady Hunter, being among the visitors who heard all this, began to wonder what could have detained her husband. Meanwhile Sir Paul was found and guided down in safety. It being now nearly dark, with great discretion he dismissed the guides as he neared the village, and sauntered to his hotel as if nothing had been amiss, passing unobserved through the little crowd which was waiting anxiously to learn who it was the men had been sent in search of. As he, with complete *sang froid*, arrived at the hotel, Lady Hunter ran towards him, saying, 'Oh, Paul, I am so glad to see you back! where have you been? Some silly man has lost himself on one of the mountains, and *I feared it might be you!*'

It was here we cemented a friendship with Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, begun at the Kaltbad, while we found Charles Wyndham at St. Moritz, and had several pleasant days together; modest

climbs, walks, and drives, to gather flowers in the Heuthal or Edelweiss above Zuz, filled up our stay—during which the sad news reached us of Harry Montague's almost sudden death in America, while travelling with *Diplomacy*, in which, as the hero, he had made a great success. Poor fellow! he was a distinct loss in certain parts to the stage, and his charm of manner made him a special favourite everywhere. When in his company he somehow had the gift of impressing the idea upon you that he had thought but of you since your last parting, and, when he said 'good-bye,' that you would remain in his memory until you met again. It was hard to die, away from friends, in a foreign land, and as young in years as he always seemed in heart—for he was hardly more than midway between thirty and forty, that age upon the border-land when one has to own to being no more quite young, while resenting for a while that ambiguous epithet—'middle-aged.'

From the Engadine we drove in four days—if lucky in your carriage and your coachman, a pleasant way to travel—to the Lake of Lucerne; our stopping-places being Thusis, Dissentis, over the Oberalp to Andermatt, and through Göschenen, with its brigand-like colony of Italian navvies working fiercely at the great tunnel and the mountain-railway; then on through Altorf: the little town sacred to the Swiss idol—William Tell: to Brunnen, where we met Fanny Kemble, than whom no greater lover of the Alps has lived. Year after year, until old age has come, do the mountains draw her towards them, and many a sweet description of their beauties is to be found in her charming books. After a day spent at Lucerne, whither we liked to go, if only for a night, to drink in the weird and plaintive music of the big church-organ there, we went on to Paris to see a little of the Exhibition. It was hard, indeed, that year to get one's foot inside the Français, and only through the courtesy of Got and the then *directeur*, M. Emile Perrin, were we able to see Augier's last new play, *Les Fourchambault*, and to be enraptured by Sarah Bernhardt in the brilliant production of *Hernani*. We this year paid an interesting visit to the charming green-room of this most complete of theatres, and also saw some of the *loges des artistes*.

Of course we went to see the realistic panorama of the 'Siege of Paris,' and, while there, were greatly annoyed by a strange-looking creature, who persisted in dogging our steps whichever way we turned. He wore an odd slouch hat, the collar of his coat was turned up, and one could not fail to observe his moustache, which seemed to grow upwards in a singular fashion. This man followed us round and round the gallery of the panorama, always halting when we did; at last, growing more familiar, he bestowed upon us half-hearted nudges and mutterings, which, without disclosing his nationality, cast doubts upon his sanity. He presently became more violent in his gesticulations, when his moustache suddenly *fell to the ground*, and at once revealed the well-known features of —*J. L. Toole!*

MR. BANCROFT'S INTRODUCTION TO M. SARDOU.

It was during this stay in Paris that I was taken, according to promise, by my friend Pierre Berton to Marly-le-roi to be presented to Victorien Sardou. We had a charming day, passing on our road from St. Germain the château of the great rival dramatist, Alexandre Dumas. The old house, standing in a forest of well-kept grounds, where Sardou passes much of his life, looking down upon the distant city where he has known the miseries of a struggling author, and basked in the adulation of the theatre-going world, is itself, with its enormous sphinxes, which guard the massive iron gates, its tapestries, old furniture, and 'black-letter' folios, alone well worth a visit, without the privilege I enjoyed of a long talk with their distinguished collector, a small, nervous, lean and wiry man, shabbily dressed, wearing an old smoking-cap, his throat enveloped in a white silk muffler—*et toujours souffrant*, he being a martyr to neuralgia. His head in those days, when he was just forty-seven, struck me as a mixture of familiar points in pictures of Napoleon Buonaparte and a typical Jesuit father, with a smile almost as telling as Henry Irving's.

He talked with nervous speed, and then, with a charming manner, would check himself politely for my foreign ear; he deeply regretted knowing no English, but said that his children, to whom he pointed as they played under the shade of the big trees, were learning our language. Even in a single visit it was easy to feel that he had read and studied much. He is known to have rather a mania for building and reconstructing. He is a hard worker, a great reader, and loves to be surrounded by beautiful things. He talked for a long while about *Dora* (*Diplomacy*), and dwelt with glee on being abused for the perfume incident by which Zicka's theft is detected, which he proved to have been a bit of real life. The accomplished Jules Claretie, now director of the Théâtre Français, thus speaks of him: 'Il sait tout, Sardou, il a tout lu, il cause comme personne. L'auteur dramatique est égalé en lui—et ce n'est pas peu dire—par le merveilleux causeur, érudit, alerte, léger, profond, incomparable. C'est un conteur exquis et un diseur parfait.' Like the great majority of his countrymen I found he had never left his native land! At our parting he gave me a photograph of himself to hang up in our green-room, inscribed 'Souvenir bien cordial au Directeur et aux Artistes du Théâtre du Prince de Galles. Septembre, 1878.—V. SARDOU.'

As we did not intend to take up our parts again in *Diplomacy*, which ran bravely on, we lingered awhile in Paris and extended our holiday.

Breakfasting one morning at Champeaux, with the odd shingly floor and the trees reaching to its glass roof, in the Place de la Bourse, we were victims of a harmless practical joke, which we afterwards heartily enjoyed, indulged in at our expense by a humorous friend who had seen us enter the restaurant, where,

presently, to our amazement, our little party became the object of extraordinary attention and curiosity. Nothing seemed to be thought good enough for us, the bowing and scraping increased with each course, no end of little *politesses* were pressed upon us, humble waiters left our table to the control of more gorgeous persons, and the proprietors—or those in authority—attended to our wants themselves. We wondered what it could mean! we saw no other English people in the room, and felt it to be unlikely, almost impossible, that we were recognised, which might otherwise have accounted for part of the curiosity, and for *some* of the attention. Scattered groups of remaining visitors whispered together, and gazed at us in a marked and interested way. When, at last, our bill was brought, it certainly seemed a little extravagant; but as nothing compared to the ceremonial with which our coats and cloaks were given to us. The whole staff and their relatives—uncles, cousins, aunts—seemed to be assembled to see our modest departure. People rose from their seats and bowed humbly. Why? We had been pointed out, as we learnt, when we gained the street, to the *restaurateur* as members of the English royal family, travelling *incog.* to see the Exhibition quietly! We certainly discovered that we had breakfasted *en Prince*.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SEASON OF 1878-79.

A month at Brighton—Death of Phelps and Wigan—Scheme to build a new theatre, and its abandonment—The end of *Diplomacy*—Reproduction of *Caste*—Letter by Mr. Bancroft to the *Times* on the production of plays by English authors—Death of John Clarke—His weaknesses—His lameness—Great kindness shown to actors by medical men—Sir William Fergusson—Sir Morell Mackenzie—Mr. Critchett—Dr. Quain—*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*—'Celebrities at Home' in the *World*—Count Gleichen—Prince Leiningen—Sudden illness of George Honey—A tragedy behind the scenes—A summer programme—*Heads or Tails*, *Sweethearts*, and *Good for Nothing*—The Comédie Française company at the Gaiety—A banquet at the Mansion House—Why we took the Haymarket Theatre—Holiday notes—An old lady and her parrot—Pleasant companions—Death of Fechter—Entertainment for the church at Pontresina—*Der erste Komicer*.

WHEN our pleasant ramble abroad was over, and we returned to town, of course we went to see *Diplomacy*, and found those new to it acting remarkably well; although, to confess the truth, altered casts of plays, however well acted, have rarely the same vitality, unless a sufficient lapse of time blunts vivid remembrance of first impressions. It was evident, however, that the run would still continue for some time, so we resolved not to withdraw the play

until January, and then again to revive *Caste*, seven years having passed away since we had laid aside that old friend. After a short round of autumn enjoyment in town, we spent the month of November at Brighton, travelling there in two easy days by road.

We had a pleasant time by the sea, and our friends at the theatre, Arthur Cecil, Harry Conway, Henry Kemble, and Forbes-Robertson, would come down to us on the Sundays; among other visitors were our old friend John Hare, whose country company was acting *Olivia* at Mrs. Nye Chart's pretty theatre (he himself one night giving his remarkable performance in *A Quiet Rubber*), J. L. Toole, and one eminent in another walk of life, but always very devoted to our calling, whom we have spoken of before, and now had known and loved for years, the late Mr. Critchett, who was snatching a brief autumn holiday, and, on his favourite old gray, was often at the heels of the Brighton harriers.

It was during this month that two deaths occurred, which robbed the list of distinguished actors of names not easily replaced —Samuel Phelps and Alfred Wigan. The first-named passed peacefully away at a little farm in Essex; the latter died in pain at Folkestone.

That Phelps did much for the stage he so many years adorned, no lovers of it will dispute. His long and honourable career as actor and manager at Sadler's Wells alone entitles his name to the high place it holds: famous as it was for the production of more than thirty of Shakespeare's plays. The remembrance of his still splendid performances in later life at Drury Lane, the Queen's, and the Gaiety Theatres is bright with modern playgoers, as with young actors who could not fail to gain by their association with so true and fine an artist.

Phelps's quiet, retiring nature made him a home-bird, and he found his chief amusement in long walks and in fishing. Only late in life did he become a member of the Garrick Club; his presence there was so welcome to those who knew him as to cause great regret that he was so chary in his visits. An admirable portrait of the famous actor in the character of Cardinal Wolsey, painted by Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who, like Jefferson, combines the use of the palette and maulstick with his love for the sock and buskin, and who played often with the old actor at the end of his career, was added by subscription on the part of a hundred members to the valuable collection of paintings owned by the club.

We have a small anecdote of Phelps to tell when he was playing Virginius in the old Sadler's Wells days. It happened on one occasion that the 'super-master,' who acts as the leader of crowds, had met with an accident, and could not therefore fulfil his duties as First Citizen in the forum scene, where Appius Claudius claims Virginia from her father. So the little part which leads the chorus of voices was given to the man who was second in command. As the time drew near he became very anxious and nervous, although

the stage-manager had gone through the words with him several times. The scene in the tragedy where Virginius appeals to the crowd for their support against the demand of the tyrant Appius Claudius is as follows :

VIRGINIUS : 'Friends and citizens, your hands, your hands——'

CROWD : 'They are yours, Virginius ; they are yours.'

VIRGINIUS : 'If ye have wives—if ye have children——'

CROWD : 'We have—we have.'

But the poor nervous man, in his fright, put the cart before the horse, and the dialogue ran thus :

VIRGINIUS : 'Your hands, your hands——'

CITIZEN : 'We have, Virginius ; we have !'

VIRGINIUS : 'If ye have wives—if ye have children——'

CITIZEN : 'They are *yours*, Virginius ; they are *yours* !'

Strong in its contrast to the strength and ruggedness of Phelps's acting was the delicate and minute art of Alfred Wigan, which will be perhaps best recalled by thoughts of John Mildmay, the *Poor Nobleman*, and Achille Talma Dufard.

It was at this time that a scheme, which had for some time occupied our thoughts, to build a new theatre reached its height—a scheme which embraced the notion of a double stage worked hydraulically, to save delay in setting scenes, and since carried out successfully in America. Our idea was at length, after long consideration of the many difficulties involved, which of course included the builder's joy, 'ancient lights,' abandoned. The site was excellent : where Newman's Yard stood formerly in Regent Street, since converted to a meat market, then again thought of for a theatre, and since transformed into a picture gallery by Charles Hallé and Comyns Carr.

Early in December Mr. W. S. Gilbert read to us his charming play *Gretchen*, than which no work of his is more finished, polished, or poetic. Its fitness for our stage, however, we feared, and the matter went no further ; but we did not lose the play without a deep sigh of regret. Driven to desperation for some new work, we decided to accept the again offered and twice discarded *Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, prompted greatly to withdraw our former refusals by the success at the Haymarket Theatre of *The Crisis*, a version of *Les Fourchambault*, which seemed to us, when we saw it at the Français, a still more difficult subject for adaptation.

Caste, as we have said, was soon to be revived, and the rehearsals, now in progress, were almost as arduous as for a new play, only George Honey and ourselves remaining of the original cast. It may here be mentioned, as an instance of the great change that had come over things theatrical, and for which we were chiefly responsible, that Mr. Honey, when he first played Eccles in 1867, received eighteen pounds a week, while for this revival, we guaranteeing also a six months' engagement, his salary was sixty.

The career of *Diplomacy* was chequered at the end of its first

year of life through the illness of several representatives. Mr. Clayton was *hors de combat* through loss of voice, Mr. Conway was thrown from his horse and severely wounded in the head, Miss Roselle, owing to a domestic affliction, had also to be absent. In these emergencies Miss Henri appeared as Dora, Mr. Forbes-Robertson as Julian; while Mr. Kemble, with a loyalty to the theatre for which we were much indebted, played at different times the parts of Algie Fairfax, Henry Beauclerc, and Count Orloff—Mr. Arthur Cecil being the only member of the cast who was so fortunate as to remain steadfast, for he played the Baron Stein throughout the long run of the play.

After a brilliant result, augmented considerably by great successes in America and throughout England, we withdrew the play twelve months after its production, and the following evening, Saturday, January 11th, *Caste*, which had last been revived in September, 1871, the year its author died, was played as follows: George D'Alroy, Mr. John Clayton; Captain Hawtree and Eccles (their original characters), Mr. Bancroft and Mr. George Honey; Sam Gerridge, Mr. Arthur Cecil; the Marquise de Saint-Maur, Miss Le Thiere; Esther Eccles, Miss Amy Roselle (a charming performance which greatly enhanced her reputation); Polly Eccles (her original character), Mrs. Bancroft. The favourite old play was marvellously welcomed, and the receipts equalled even the early days of a new production, so we can turn, for the moment, from our immediate doings.

As an item in a discussion at this time started in the *Times* with regard to the absence from our stage of English works, and the neglect by managers of the 'great unacted,' the following letter may be worth reprinting; it will, at least, serve to recall pleasant memories of plays and things theatrical in those days:

'Some letters which have appeared in the *Times* commenting upon your article, "The Stage in 1878," would, I think, lead your readers to infer that English dramatic authors have been badly treated by the lessees of London theatres, and that their productions have been ignored, while the works of French playwrights have been unduly encouraged. In my humble opinion, this is not at all the case. At the Prince of Wales's Theatre, since 1865, twenty-two pieces have been produced; of these, thirteen were new works written by English authors—*Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School*, and *M. P.*, by Mr. Robertson; *How She Loves Him*, by Mr. Boucicault; *War to the Knife*, *A Hundred Thousand Pounds*, and *Wrinkles*, by Mr. Byron; *Man and Wife*, by Mr. Wilkie Collins; *Sweethearts*, by Mr. Gilbert; and *Tame Cats*, by Mr. Edmund Yates. Revivals of the following six plays, all English, have been given: The *Merchant of Venice*, the *School for Scandal*, *Money*, *London Assurance*, *Masks and Faces*, and *An Unequal Match;* while two plays only—*Nos Intimes* (*Peril*), *Dora* (*Diplo-*

macy), and a one-act comedy, *Le Village* (*The Vicarage*), have been adapted from the French stage.

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'I could write in the same strain about other theatres, and in several cases could prove that where successful French plays were rapidly adapted and acted, it was simply to dam the floods of failure that had set in on the production of original English works, but I do not think the argument would be at all interesting to the London play-goer, who, I take it, cares but little for the source whence his entertainment is derived; I think, rather, that managers would be indeed to blame were they to deny the English public the pleasure of witnessing adaptations to our stage of the many great dramatic works which are written by eminent Frenchmen, and I wonder if German dramatists are blamed because *Caste* has achieved a great success as a translated play in Berlin, or whether the Italians upbraid Signor Salvini because he finds the greatest means for the display of his genius in a translation of *Othello*.—Your faithful servant, S. B. BANCROFT.'

An old friend and comrade, John Clarke, who for a long time had been ill from the same scourge—consumption—which carried off his former rival, James Rogers, died in February of this year. His association with us, as this book tells, was close and intimate, never being, to our remembrance, broken by an unkind word.

Clarke, as the reader has been already told, dearly loved praise, and this pardonable weakness was well known to his comrades, who delighted in teasing him now and again by lauding some other actor in his own line. This so irritated Clarke that he would always quickly change the subject. One night he and some others—Toole was one of them—after supping together at a club, were driving in a cab in the direction of Clarke's house, as all the party lived in that neighbourhood. Toole determined upon getting Clarke to invite them in for a chat, that he might play upon his weakness, so began to carry out the scheme in this way:

TOOLE: 'We'll come in if you'll ask us, Clarke.'

CLARKE: 'No, Johnny; not to-night. I must get to bed now, as I have an early rehearsal. So I'll say good-night.'

TOOLE: 'Well, I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you the wonderful criticism I heard yesterday on your acting as Tom Dibbles; it must have been a fine performance.'

CLARKE (*pleased*): 'Oh—well, I hope I made a success. But—a——'

TOOLE: 'I wish I could have seen it.'

CLARKE: 'It's not so late as I thought. Will you come in for a few minutes?' (*They entered the house.*)

TOOLE: 'Didn't Rogers play the part once at the Strand?'

CLARKE (*uneasily*): 'Ye—e—s.'

TOOLE: 'Clever fellow, Rogers. I suppose you saw him in it?' (*sitting down*).

CLARKE: 'Look here, old fellow, you'd better not sit down, for I can't let you stay long.'

TOOLE: 'But I don't think Rogers could have been suited to the part somehow.'

CLARKE: 'Will you have a cigar? Ah, I forgot you don't smoke; but have some whisky?'

TOOLE: 'No, thanks' (*getting up*). 'I don't think Jimmy was to be mentioned in the same breath with you, Clarkie, as a character actor.'

CLARKE (*flattered*): 'Oh—well—a—all well enough in certain parts, you know—too fond of applause, perhaps. Do have some whisky; it's not half-past one, and do sit down.' (*After a pause.*)

TOOLE: 'But everybody agrees that Buckstone was inimitable when he first played Tom Dibbles. I suppose you often saw him?'

CLARKE: 'Well, I must bundle you off, my boy; I'm rather tired. I'll let you out myself. Good-night.'

TOOLE (*preparing to go*): 'When you played in *Box and Cox* with George Honey *you* got the most applause, I always heard.'

CLARKE: 'Ha, ha! Yes, I did; I did.'

TOOLE: 'Some one told me George was somehow "out of it" altogether.'

CLARKE: 'Yes, I think he was. Do come and sit up near the fire. I like a chat when work is over.'

TOOLE: 'I think it rather hard on you, though, when they will have it that you were a little heavy.'

CLARKE: 'Oh, they say that, do they? Well, it's just upon two; you really must be off. I'll see you out.'

TOOLE (*buttoning up his coat*): '*Were* you a bit heavy, Clarkie?'

CLARKE (*shutting the door with a bang*): 'Good-night.'

It was often a marvel how the little man hid his lameness, the result of an unfortunate accident through trusting himself, never being an accomplised rider, on a strange and unmanageable horse, which was lent to him by an officer in the Blues or Life Guards. He always said he owed the preservation of his leg entirely to the skill and patience of Sir William Fergusson, but for whom it would have been taken off by the first surgeon called in. John Clarke's good qualities were those of a fine nature; his little foible—jealousy of other comedians who played the same parts sometimes—was, at its worst, but amusing.

The mention of Sir William Fergusson's name recalls vividly to our minds the great and constant acts of kindness shown to actors by him, and by many other distinguished medical men. Let us hope our gratitude tries to keep pace with their large-heartedness. We could fill many pages and write many eminent

names concerning this subject, but will content ourselves with instances that had special reference to our own theatre.

During this run of *Caste*, one night we received a message from the stalls that 'Dr. (now Sir) Morell Mackenzie would like to speak to us.' He had been for years a friend—indeed, it would be impossible to over-estimate the services he has rendered us, sternly refusing at all times to accept any fee or reward, whenever sent for, and however tried his time; even to the extent of paying, throughout a prolonged sickness in our house, three visits in a day. This goodness is well known among singers and actors, and we hope he will forgive us for speaking of it to a wider circle. Dr. Mackenzie was brought round to the green-room, and startled us by saying quietly, 'You have a dying man upon your stage, who is only fit to be in bed.' Inquiries told us that a poor fellow who only appeared as a servant for one minute in the second act of *Caste*, had been for some weeks ill, but was for so short a time in the theatre, and kept his troubles so much to himself, that we knew nothing of them. Dr. Mackenzie for a long while drove almost daily to a humble lodging in a remote part of London, where by no chance could he be likely to have other patients, to keep this one alive. He was patched up for a time through unceasing kindness; but his state was beyond the power of doctors to do more than let him enter another year, when his troubles ceased for ever.

A similar instance of wonderful kindness on the part of the late Mr. Critchett was also shown to a member of our company, whose child had the misfortune to so seriously injure an eye, that Mr. Critchett found it necessary to remove it; afterwards, and for several weeks, going long distances to watch the poor boy through the various stages of adapting an artificial substitute: not only insisting upon doing all this, but providing everything that was necessary, the distinguished oculist's fee being limited to the father's grateful thanks. The only return we were allowed to insist upon to these and to many other such men, was to make them at all times, and especially for performances of exceptional interest, free of our theatre, where they were ever the most welcome guests.

We cannot quite leave this subject without a brief allusion to another kind medical friend to our profession, Dr. Quain, to whom we once remarked that his bright and cheery manner would alone make him welcomed by any sufferer. 'Ah!' he replied, with his well-known *soupçon* of an Irish brogue, 'although I am by nature cheerful I began quite the other way, but was cured in my youth by a kind friend who was already an eminent physician. One day he took me with him to see a patient who was in a very critical state, and when we approached the door of the bedroom, I put on a grave and, as I then thought, appropriately solemn countenance; but my friend turned round just in time to start with horror,

and whisper, "For mercy's sake, don't look like that, man, or the poor soul will take you for the undertaker!" I never forgot that lesson.'

It was decided to place *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy* in Mr. James Albery's hands for adaptation, he having lately, with considerable skill, got over the difficulties of *Les Fourchambault;* and, as we closed the theatre this year for the first four days of Passion Week, it was during a brief holiday spent at the Beach House Hotel at Westgate that we received an admirable first instalment of his work. Among other light literature of the week was some account of ourselves in the house we lived in then as 'Celebrities at Home' in the *World.* We found it pleasant reading, and, in the hope of its still proving so, reprint part of it, as the remarks embrace a very interesting, though false, prophecy concerning the little theatre in Tottenham Street :

'As Sunday night settles down on western London, and average Christians are safe in church, or poring over a good book at home, carriages and cabs drive smartly up to the little red house in Cavendish Square. It is neat and unpretending, this little red house ; but those invited to it on Sunday evenings come in rare good humour, for they know that they will meet pleasant company of a representative kind. The noble army of nobodies are not bidden to these dinners ; for host and hostess have but one day in the week to dine out or entertain their friends, and time and space must be made the most of. It is true that of all artistic workers, the actor or singer enjoys success in his art the most fully. He may have left pain and sorrow at home ; but the shadows of life vanish in the glare of the footlights. It is not so easy for the painter or the poet to feel this. The applause awarded to the painter is as a kind of afterglow on his work. The poet is worse off still ; for years will pass, and probably his best work be done, before a tardy and grudging world will accept him at all. There is nothing of this delay, hesitation, and obscurity in the career of the actor. If up to the required standard of merit, he will not long blush unseen. What names, except those of half a dozen leading politicians, were and are best known even in this serious England of ours? Those of actors and singers.

'There is, however, one drawback to the actor's glory. Work begins for him when others go to play ; and bating one day in the week, dramatic artists are playing at Castor and Pollux with their friends : one is always where the other is not. Wherefore Sunday is highly prized at the little red house in Cavendish Square. As the canonical dinner-hour approaches, Mrs. Bancroft's pretty drawing-room is occupied by men and women celebrated in the world of politics, law, literature, and art. The talk to-night is—among a hundred things—of *Caste* and Mr. Bancroft's Hawtree, declared on all hands impossible of achievement by anybody but a soldier, till the host observes, "I never miss an opportunity of explaining that

I never was a soldier in my life, either regular or volunteer, although you are good enough to say that Hawtree is too perfect to have been done by anybody but a soldier. Perhaps you are caught by the swinging walk, and the knack of carrying the sword. It is merely the result of observation !"

'Dinner over, there is, after the usual drawing-room interval, an adjournment to the apartment overhead, the airiest and blithest of smoking-rooms, overlooking the greenery of Cavendish Square. It is here that, in an atmosphere fragrant with Cabanas, stories and jokes are exchanged—some fresh from the mint, like Mr. Byron's last saying to Mr. Justice Straight at the Beefsteak Club ; others referring to theatrical and literary folk dead and gone, like poor "Tom Robertson." "Poor fellow," remarks Mrs. Bancroft, "he was only just beginning to enjoy his success when he died. And how dull people seem to have been to neglect him so long !" The opinion is hazarded that *Society* is not such a dramatic black swan after all, and that unless marvellously well played it is unbearable. "But they need not have discouraged him," replies the spirited lady of the house. "Perhaps Wigan, Charles Mathews, Sothern, and Buckstone were right in refusing *Society ;* but Mr. Buckstone need not have added prophecy to refusal by saying *Society* must fail wherever it is produced." "Prophecy is indeed dangerous," observes Mr. Bancroft, from behind a huge cigar. "Even such clever people as journalists are apt to break down when they try to play the prophet. Look at this cutting from a newspaper edited by a very clever man."

'The cutting is certainly curious. The scribe of the year 1835, when Mrs. Nisbett was manager of the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Street, and D'Orsay, Vincent Cotton, and "Dolly" Fitzclarence were among the company present on the first night, delivers himself as follows : "No theatre in the kingdom has undergone so many changes, both in management and title, in a few years as the Queen's. As certain parties are endeavouring to make it *attractive under female management, apparently sparing no exertion or expense*, it may not be uninteresting to give some of its history, from the last seven years. Beverley had a lease of it at a rent of £120 per annum ; and in the last year of his lease, by the death of an old woman, the proprietorship fell into the hands of a person named Perry, then a grocer's shopman. Perry purchased Beverley's remaining interest, and immediately contrived to let it for £1,000 a year ! The lowest sum he has since demanded, but which he has certainly not been fortunate enough always to receive, since all the lessees have been ruined by the speculation, has been £800. It has been called as follows : King's Concert Rooms, Regency, Tottenham Street Theatre, West London Theatre, Fitzroy Theatre, and Queen's Theatre. 'Fools and their money,' they say, 'are soon parted ;' and when we look to the expenses incurred, and the nature of the entertainments, we cannot

discover a more expeditious method of relieving them of it. *This theatre can never be a fashionable one;* we must not have namby-pamby small-talk, but plenty of blue fire and mysterious disappearances, which can alone, with reduced rent and prices, draw anything like a paying audience."

'Nothing was ever quite so wise as this opinion looked upon paper. The management of Mrs. Nisbett, then the absolute queen of comedy, as well as the most beautiful woman on the stage—albeit Madame Vestris contested this latter palm—ended in failure; and the scribe had the pleasure of seeing the little house in Tottenham Street, lurid with blue fire, moderately filled with cheap audiences, and let at a very low rent. It never made a success even upon these terms, and seemed doomed to steady and persistent failure till Miss Marie Wilton came to the rescue.

'As might be expected, the little red house in Cavendish Square is adorned with many souvenirs of artist-life and artist-friends, such as Mr. Frank Miles's portraits of Mrs. Langtry and Mrs. Cornwallis West; a portrait of Maria Foote, sometime Countess of Harrington, a kind friend to Marie Wilton to the day of her death; Mr. Val Prinsep's sketch of his picture of "The Minuet;" a painting by Mr. "Joe" Jefferson of a river-side scene; and many similar tokens of regard. The smoking-room is decked with odds and ends from the Engadine, where Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft spend part of their well-earned holiday year after year. No souvenir of glacier-land, however, is so dear to the hostess as the well-named "Monk," an enormous Mount St. Bernard mastiff, whose brilliant coat speaks of the grooming he receives daily. This splendid animal is the pet of the house and the delight of all visitors to that focus of good humour and good taste.'

It was also during the spring of this year that Count Gleichen (H.S.H. Prince Victor of Hohenlohe) accepted a commission for our busts. Many a pleasant morning was passed in this way in the studio built in the garden of St. James's Palace.

One day Prince Leiningen came in, and for some time watched the proceedings. Suddenly we observed that he was smiling, and asked the reason. He replied, 'I don't know how it is; but the more serious Mrs. Bancroft tries to look, the more desirous I am to laugh, as there always seems to be a smile waiting to burst forth, and the eyes seem all the time to be dying to laugh, which, you know, is very infectious.' The Prince's remark, we fear, somewhat interfered with that day's sitting.

NOTES BY MR. BANCROFT.

From close knowledge of the details, I must tell alone how the run of *Caste* received a shock from the sudden and, as it sadly proved, the fatal though lingering illness with which George Honey was stricken while playing Eccles. For some time he had not been well, and often spoke of rheumatism in his arm and side; in fact, we learnt afterwards that

throughout the last act, for some days, he had changed part of his business on the stage, and acted, as it were, left-handed. One evening, when I arrived at the theatre, I chanced to meet Mr. Kemble, whom I had not seen for some weeks, at the stage-door; he was the 'under-study' for the part of Eccles, but, in all his long connection with us, Honey had never once been ill enough to fail in his work, nor was he at all of a complaining nature. In the course of a pleasant talk, Kemble said how tired he was of doing nothing, jokingly adding that he was driven to the resource of going to the Olympic Theatre that night to get through his evening by the aid of a tiresome melodrama. When I left the stage after the scene in which Polly teaches Captain Hawtree the proper use of a tea-kettle, I was in the nightly habit of finding Honey in the green-room, where we generally talked together for a little while until he was called to end the act, when I went to my room to change my dress. On this particular evening he was not there, but I thought nothing of his absence, and went my way. As I was about to put on my uniform, I heard some commotion; the call-boy rushed to my door, saying, 'Come down, sir, please; Mr. Honey's in a fit, and can't go on the stage to end the act.' I ran to the wings, and just had time to say to the prompter, 'Take a cab to the Olympic Theatre, and fetch Mr. Kemble, you'll find him among the audience there,' when the cue was given for the entrance of poor Honey, who by this time had been lifted from the ground and placed in a chair. The situation reached in the play was the end of the first act, where George D'Alroy, full of love, defies the world and its opinion, resolving to marry the humble Esther Eccles; Sam Gerridge and Polly, in contrast, have been quarrelling, and she has locked the door against him, retaining the key. The romance of George and Esther, at its supreme moment, is rudely interrupted by the shaking of the door from the outside, and the voice of the now drunken Eccles, noisily asking to be let in, awakes the lovers from the land of dreams. Esther looks at George, and he at her—looks deeply full of meaning that carry on the tale; the girl silently crosses the room, gets the key from her sister, unlocks the door, when the wretched father reels into the room. This is what happened: There was no time for thought; at the moment I only saw that Honey, from whatever cause, was helpless. I gave the knocks and shook the door, crying out to Polly, in the voice of Eccles, for him to be let in. The business of the scene was gone through without those upon the stage knowing that anything was wrong. As the key was turned in the lock by Miss Roselle, I gathered Honey up in my arms, and held his body in the opened doorway, upon which tableau the curtain fell. It took but a moment then to make the terrible discovery that the audience had roared with laughter at the powerless form of a paralyzed man. To find our old comrade, who was a favourite with everyone, inarticulate, with one side of his body helpless, was a painful shock to us all. Messengers were sent

at once for medical aid, also to Honey's house to warn those there of his returning very ill: I then, with help, carried him to his room, where his vain efforts to either speak or move were dreadful to see. Dr. George Bird, of Welbeck Street, who had been our medical adviser and kind friend for many years—since the days, in fact, when he prolonged, as long as human skill could do so, the life of Tom Robertson—was the first to arrive; from his face, I saw at once that things were serious, and presently he took poor Honey home. Meanwhile, it was not difficult to cut Eccles out of the little he had to do in the second act, and Mr. Kemble, through the fortunate chance by which I knew his whereabouts, reached the theatre in time to dress and end the part; this I explained in a brief apology to the audience, who knew nothing further of the tragedy on our side of the curtain. In a few weeks poor Honey recovered sufficiently from this first stroke to come down to the theatre one night, without his doctor's sanction, and lamely played his part—a danger he was prevented from again risking by peremptory orders. With this exception, Henry Kemble gave an excellent rendering of Eccles until this third run of *Caste* was brought to a close.

The comedy was withdrawn at the end of May, and a summer programme, of the lightest nature, perhaps, ever offered to the public, was acted for the rest of the season; and, to the amazement of most people, was found strong enough to fill the theatre until nearly the end of it, when very hot weather came. The play-bill, which proves what may be almost termed the audacity of the experiment, comprised *Heads or Tails*, a little comedietta originally produced years before at the Olympic Theatre, written by Palgrave Simpson, and now acted by Arthur Cecil, Harry Conway, and Henry Kemble, who was very amusing as an amorous young man afflicted with a chronic cold: the ladies engaged in the piece were Miss Ida Hertz and Miss Augusta Wilton; followed by W. S. Gilbert's delightful gem, *Sweethearts*, in which we acted together for the first time; and Buckstone's comic drama, *Good for Nothing*, with this cast of characters: Tom Dibbles, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Harry Collier, Mr. John Clayton, who was replaced by me when he left England to join Dion Boucicault, whose eldest daughter he had married, in America; Charlie, Mr. H. B. Conway; young Mr. Simpson, Mr. Kemble; and Nan, Mrs. Bancroft.

This was the year when the company of the Comèdie Française played their brilliant engagement at the Gaiety Theatre, while their own classic home was under repair. It fell to our lot to sit next to Sarah Bernhardt, whom we had met several times before, at a luncheon given in June, in honour of the distinguished troupe of comedians which dates from Molière, at the Mansion House, when we were much amused by the extraordinary announcements of some of the distinguished guests—Monsieur Coquelin became 'Cockerleen,' while the names given to Mounet-Sully and others defy

transcription. Subsequently, we were obliged to assure Madame Bernhardt and her companions that the Lord Mayor meant no slight to them by not appearing in his robes and chain of office, nor in dispensing with the presence of his sword and macebearers. Others among them were somewhat affronted because the 'Long Parlour' in which the repast was served was adorned by busts of Wellington and Nelson!

Social events, more or less public, included some of those charming gatherings which continued for a few years on certain Sunday afternoons in the picture-rooms of the Grosvenor Gallery. Nothing of the sort that we remember ever was more successful in the bringing together of people of every degree and kind, from princes and princesses of the land to humble dwellers in Bohemia, for an hour or two of *camaraderie*. The names of those one saw and met there would fill a book, each page of which would burn with shining lights.

I now approach a most important event in our theatrical life,—why we took the Haymarket Theatre. Although we suffered very much at times through the inconveniences of the little theatre, and were annually reminded of its many drawbacks when the house was inspected by the Lord Chamberlain's representatives, we were loth to leave a home so endeared to us by the brightest events of our career. Nearly every theatre in London, at one time or other, had been offered to us; and we always, half-jokingly, replied, 'No, the Haymarket only will tempt us.' The knowledge of the ease, however, with which we could fill a larger house with a good play, and some remembrance of the shoals of people who had never been able to see *Diplomacy*, for example, led to serious thoughts upon the subject, as well as the scheme of building a new theatre, which we have mentioned. Nor must it be forgotten how many rivals had sprung up since the opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1865. The Holborn, the Queen's (both since destroyed), the Gaiety, the Vaudeville, the Court, the Criterion, the Globe, the Opéra Comique, the Folly (Toole's Theatre), and the Avenue, all were new; while the Savoy and the Comedy were already talked about. All these new houses introduced, naturally, the luxuries we had started. What a little time before had been exceptional now became general; for in earlier days, it may be remembered, carpets in a theatre were unknown (to this day the only *fauteuils* in which they can be found in Paris are at the Grand Opéra; for even at the Français the luxury stops short at the *balcon*). This was my state of mind when the freehold of the St. James's Theatre was offered to us at a price so tempting that it would have paid, we thought, to pull it down and speculate in building chambers on the site had we cared to do so. The fortunes of the Haymarket were not at this time of the brightest, and some strange and indescribable presentiment seemed to say, 'Don't even enter the St. James's, or you will be tempted to buy it, and perhaps at the wrong moment.' Anyhow,

that was my line of action. Directly afterwards we heard that Lord Kilmorey had become the purchaser, and as we had refused the freehold, we found it easier, perhaps, to decline to become a tenant. Then the news was soon afloat that Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal, who had now become his partner, were to be the new managers, by whom it would be opened, after great alteration, in the autumn. The friendly rivalry of our old companion, Hare, at the Court mattered not, both being small outlying theatres—indeed, was often good for both of us—but this news, I admit, made me think how I could say checkmate! In a few hours I was closeted with Mr J. S. Clarke, the then lessee of the Haymarket, to whom I frankly said, 'I never had the pleasure of meeting you off the stage before, Mr. Clarke; but I will lay my cards on the table, and say at once I want your theatre. How is it to be done?' All sorts of schemes and plans were talked out between us, and for several weeks the matter was in abeyance. Then came a time when the negotiations were quite at an end: I resolved to think no more of the idea, and to stay at the dear old place. Suddenly Mr. Clarke asked to see me one morning, and reopened the business. In a few days all was settled. I agreed to buy the remnant of his tenancy; the trustees promised me a fresh lease of the property, and I undertook to rebuild the interior. It was thus we achieved the ambition we sought before we finally gave up management (which even then we contemplated), to be lessees of the first Comedy Theatre in England.

The close of this season was a very busy time. Long consultations in lawyers' offices: the same with architects: and anxious interviews with Mr. Albery, who was behindhand with his work—the play we had fixed on to open our final brief campaign at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; for which followed the making of fresh engagements, as we both decided not to play in it, that my energies might be better given to the rebuilding of our future home. However, all things have their end, and so had these trying weeks. Great help had to be given to Mr. Albery with the last act of the play, through unfortunate ill health which befell him at the time. The rehearsals proceeded well, however, and on the 1st of August the season closed. On the 2nd I signed the Haymarket lease; and on the 3rd, worn out, we hurried off to our good friend, Pontresina.

HOLIDAY NOTES.

On our journey from Charing Cross to Dover, we had one more passenger in our compartment in the person of an elderly maiden lady, a native of the Emerald Isle, as we soon discovered. By her side was a big cage covered with a green baize cap. We were soon made aware that a parrot was inside by a remark every now and then, in a broad Irish brogue, from underneath the aforesaid green baize: 'Hullabaloo, that's roight!' This speech from the parrot, which it had evidently been taught in

the kitchen, greatly annoyed its mistress, who, every time it was uttered, retaliated by giving the cage a bang. The proceeding seemed so usual that the bird considered it as part of the performance, and was often only encouraged to repeat the observation. The old lady exhibited much anxiety about the probable state of the Channel, and kept asking questions of me as to what I (M. E. B.) thought it would be like; and as I answered her, she would reply, in powerful Irish, with the same question in other words, thus: 'Are ye a good sailor?' 'Not at all.' 'Ye're not?' 'No.' 'Ain't ye?' 'Do you think it'll be calm?' 'I think so.' 'Ye do?' 'Yes.' 'Do yer?' The parrot interrupting every now and then from under the covering, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.' 'You think it'll be loike a lake?' 'I really am sure it will be calm.' 'Ye are?' 'Yes.' 'Are ye?' Parrot, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.'

When we were on board, it turned out to be a little rougher than we expected. The Irish lady was seated on a chair with the cage close to her, and at every heave of the boat the poor thing gave indications that she was *not* a good sailor; the hidden parrot, at each evidence of her sufferings, and much to her annoyance, exclaimed loudly, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.'

At the Roseg Hotel, the friends we either found there, or who arrived soon afterwards, numbered Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Yates, Mr. (now Sir) Arthur Sullivan, Mr. Joseph Barnby, Mr. J. C. Parkinson, Mr. and Mrs. George Lewis, Mr. Otto Goldschmidt, Sir Daniel and Lady Lysons, Mr. Briton Riviere, Mr. Oscar Browning, Mr. Rudolph Lehmann, Mr. and Mrs. Meadows White, and Mr. Arthur Cecil. Does not the mere mention of these names bespeak a happy holiday? The news came, just after our arrival, of Fechter's wretched death in America. Edmund Yates, who knew him well, shared our regrets that the last years of this once fine actor's life should have been so sad. But a decade or so before, the idol of the public, the compeer of all distinguished in the arts, the welcomed guest at homes like Gad's Hill; and now to die, beyond the seas, neglected, friendless, almost forgotten. Few actors at their zenith have held greater sway; few could compare with him in romantic parts; fewer still could claim to have stirred two nations of playgoers in different tongues; but such is the fleeting nature of our work, so small the record of it left behind, that one might ask how many are they who now can speak of Fechter as he really was some five-and-twenty years ago! His talent was not confined to the stage, as an admirable and spirited bust of himself, his own work, now in the Garrick Club, will show.

Happy, lazy days, pleasant walks and drives with one or other of the friends whose names we have mentioned, and whose presence made this year's stay more than ever to be remembered, soon restored us from the wear of the hard end of our finished season, and attached us more firmly than ever to the Engadine. Many wonder at our fidelity, and fail to see the strong attraction there. These

are matters not to be argued, or all the world might hurry for its holiday to one spot ; but if to one spot we owe gratitude for recovered health and strength, for peace and rest from the turmoil of a busy life, that spot is Pontresina.

The gratitude we feel towards the Engadine reminds me that one day I was wandering through its beautiful woods with Mrs. George Lewis, when we chanced to talk on this very subject of gratitude, and I related to her a few cases in my experience where great kindnesses had been rewarded by the opposite quality. After expressing her opinion, Mrs. Lewis added, 'Well, I ought not to be very surprised, for I know of an instance which is, to say the least, startling. It was told to me by the friend to whom it occurred. A maid who had not been with her very long fell seriously ill. The lady not only fed this girl upon all sorts of delicacies, but absolutely nursed her, night and day, during the serious part of her illness. The girl recovered, and was sent away to regain strength : but on her return she gave notice to quit. Upon being asked her reason for so unaccountable a decision, she replied that she had nothing to complain of, except that as her mistress had nursed her so carefully through an illness, she could not possibly be a lady, as no lady would have done it ; therefore, as she could not afford to live with anyone but a lady, she must leave !'

Moral.—'There was once an animal with long ears, who, when he had drunk from the pail, kicked it over.'

To aid the funds of the proposed little English church, we got up our first important entertainment—this year in the big room of the Krone Hotel—the sum realized being so great that the foundation-stone was laid before we went away, and the building really started. With such friends to help as were this year assembled there, the programme took a strong musical turn, and the amusement provided was very exceptional to be able to offer in a far-off mountain village. Visitors came in crowds from the neighbouring resorts as well, and the affair was a great success all round. Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. Otto Goldschmidt played a splendid overture *à quatre mains*. We gave readings and recitations, which were interspersed with songs, and concluded the entertainment with the musical triumviretta, *Cox and Box*, which was admirably played by the accomplished composer of its delightful melodies ; Mr. Arthur Cecil ; and Mr. Barnby, who was a capital Sergeant Bouncer. I was highly gratified at moving the great actress, Madame Ristori, to tears during my reading of 'The May Queen,' and very pleased with the bouquets of lovely mountain-flowers handed to me by the well-known chaplain at Pontresina, the Rev. J. W. Ayre.

The preparation for this entertainment was most amusing. Nothing was heard for days in the hotel but snatches of songs, poems, recitations, musical selections, and dialogue from *Cox and Box*. I used to spend the early morning in the drawing-room,

rehearsing Tennyson's poem, with Mr. Otto Goldschmidt at the piano. I had thought of introducing music at certain parts of the poem, and asked Mr. Goldschmidt to kindly arrange something appropriate for me. He was so pleased with the idea (for it had never been done before) that in the kindest manner he consented, and worked as hard as though he had been going to conduct the Bach Choir. Then came the rehearsals of *Cox and Box*, so that the days were pretty well filled up, and there were one or two visitors who could not for the life of them understand it all. A friend of ours, Mr. Arthur Swan, kindly offered to collect the 'properties' for *Cox and Box*, and gradually his room became so full of them that the chambermaid thought he had gone mad, for it was with difficulty she could do her work. Arthur Sullivan was very anxious to have a gaudy waistcoat for Mr. Cox, and we searched Pontresina and St. Moritz high and low, but nothing of the kind could be found: when we asked for it, the only answer we received was, 'Nein, nein!' (If Byron had been there he would have remarked, 'I don't want *nine*, I only want *one*.') At last, after fruitless efforts, Arthur Sullivan having arrived at a stage of despair about the failure, and wondering what he should do, an idea struck me. I searched for a piece of the most startling material that I could buy, and succeeded in finding a pattern that gave one a headache to look at; 'Mr. Cox' was in ecstasies. He brought me one of his own waistcoats, which I covered with this wonderful conglomeration of colour, and the garment caused quite a flutter of amusement amongst the audience. Arthur Sullivan said he would never take the cover off that waiscoat. I wonder if he ever did!

We escaped, during this holiday, with a sprain and some few bruises, from what might have been a serious accident. Driving in an einspänner up the Bernina Road, a vicious horse nearly brought us to grief by backing over a small precipice. It was one of the few cases when jumping from the vehicle was the right thing to do, and fortunately we both did it in the nick of time.

When we again turned our faces towards home and work, it chanced to be on the same day that the Barnbys and Arthur Cecil had fixed to go; also that both Mr. Barnby and ourselves had offered Arthur Cecil a seat in either of our carriages, our first destination being the same. Those who know Arthur Cecil and the difficulty of his life—how to make up his mind—may guess the strait in which this double offer placed him. At length the matter was decided by his learning that our carriage would start twenty minutes later than the other, and he went with us; his eccentric proceedings at our departure from the hotel (messengers being despatched each minute in search of things forgotten), and his prolonged adieux, procuring the distinction of being thus spoken of by the head-waiter, who had witnessed the entertainment given by us recently, '*Das ist, gewiss, der erste komicer!*' Finally, we drove away amidst roars of laughter from a crowd of friends who saw us

off—the hood of the carriage being laden with unpacked luggage, including a large wet sponge, hurriedly flung in at the last moment by Mr. Frank Schuster—and enlivened further by cries from Arthur Cecil, who shouted in turn, 'I must go back!' 'I haven't paid my laundress!' 'I owe something at the chemist's!' 'I've given nothing to the Church!'

After a very happy time we turned homeward to face rehearsals at the Prince of Wales's and rebuilding in the Haymarket.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SEASON OF 1879-80.

Last months at the Prince of Wales's Theatre—*Duty*, Albery's adaptation of *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*—An anxious time—Second visit to Sardou—Death of Buckstone—An imitation of him—Farewell revival of *Ours* at the Prince of Wales's—Thoughts on an opening programme—Letter from Dion Boucicault—The reconstructed Haymarket—Its chief features—J. L. Toole's sorrow—Refusal of a testimonial—Farewell words at the old house—First performance at the Haymarket—The Pit Question—The dense fog—Letter from Sothern—Appreciative notices of the new arrangements—A supper-party at the Lyceum—Lord Houghton—Sardou's *Daniel Rochat*—A new version of *Le Mari à la Campagne*—Count Gleichen's busts of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft—Mr. Bancroft sits to Pellegrini ('Ape') for a portrait—Revival of *School*—Extraordinary success—Impressions of Modjeska's acting—Offer from Irving to take part in the *Corsican Brothers*—Visit from Sothern—Deaths of George Honey, J. R. Planché, and Tom Taylor—The Coquelins see *School*—The Haymarket sublet—Brilliant close of the season—Again at Pontresina—Visit of the Prince and Princess Christian—Another entertainment—Romance and reality—Paris—A visit to Père la Chaise—Malvern.

IT will be readily believed that not without many stirring emotions did we begin our final season in the little theatre which had for so many years proved our firm and steadfast friend, and where we had earned both fame and fortune—for who could foretell the fate of our bold removal, full as we were of hope concerning it?

BEGUN BY MR. BANCROFT.

Although a very effective drama was made from *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, there remained the blemish, always so against its success, of unlocking a skeleton from a dead man's cupboard, and a feeble love-story. The play was excellently acted; but the absence of both our names from the programme, an intention already mentioned, gave it a strange look, which was perhaps increased by the new arrangements and the announcement of our early departure to the Haymarket. This combination of events may have had some influence on the play's failure to attract large audiences. We produced Mr. Albery's adaptation, which was

called *Duty*, on Saturday, September 27th, when it was performed by the following cast: Sir Geoffrey Deene, Bart., Mr. H. B. Conway; John Hamond, M.P., Mr. Arthur Cecil; Dick Fanshawe, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Mr. Trelawney-Smith, Mr. Kemble; Mr. Pawley Fox, Mr. David Fisher, Jun.; Stringer, Mr. Newton; Blake, Mr. Deane; Lady Deene, Mrs. Hermann Vezin; Mabel Holne, Miss Marion Terry; Mrs. Trelawney-Smith, Mrs. John Wood; Zoe Smith, Miss Augusta Wilton; Marcelle Aubry, Miss Linda Dietz.

To suggest the 'argument of the play' we chose a line from Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*,

'The evil that men do lives after them.'

On Tuesday, September 30th, we attended the final performance at the Haymarket under Mr. J. S. Clarke's lesseeship. In his speech at the end of the play he alluded in kind terms to our undertaking, and on the following day we took possession of the theatre, when its demolition immediately commenced.

These were anxious days and weeks, as may be well imagined, not lessened by the annoyance of the new play—in spite of its being admirably acted, for how could it be otherwise with such a list of names, and always well received?—having the aspect of not lasting until the end of our time at the old theatre. We had arranged with Mr. C. J. Phipps to be our architect, and he had prepared his plans, founded on my theories, which in the kindest way he put into practical form. These plans for the new internal structure had now received the sanction of the trustees and the authorities, much of the work being already in progress.

The following letter will suggest ubiquity on my part at this time:

'110, Haverstock Hill, *October* 5, 1879.

'DEAR BANCROFT,—I called at the Haymarket yesterday to learn that "Mr. Bancroft had just left by the stage-door," and afterwards at the Prince of Wales's, to be informed that "Mr. Bancroft had just gone by the *front* door." "A plague o' both your houses," thought I. I will try to look in at the *stage*-door of the Prince of Wales's about 12.45 to-morrow, and take my chance of finding you. But if "Mr. Bancroft shall have left"—by the window! I shall go on and take my chance at *both doors* of the Haymarket.—Yours sincerely, J. S. CLARKE.'

While the first rough work of the builders, or rather destroyers, was going on, I took the opportunity to see Sardou with reference to his play which was soon to be produced at the Français, and of which we had great hopes; the distinguished author, perhaps, placed too much reliance on a statement made when he wrote to me on the subject, 'Il y a dans la pièce un très beau rôle de femme, dans le genre de Dora, *et pas l'ombre d'adultère*.' The great differ-

ence, it seems to me, in a word, between French and English novels and plays, speaking generally, is that the one so often begins at the exact point where the other usually ends—the marriage of the heroine.

I had a pleasant reception at Marly-le-Roi on this second visit to the dramatist's beautiful home. Of course I found Sardou wrapped in the inevitable white muffler, and, of course, as inevitably *souffrant*. A long and cheerful talk confirmed my hopes about the play, and sent me back in high spirits to the gay city (upon which one looks down at Marly, as, on a clear day, London can be seen from Hampstead or from Highgate). During my short stay in Paris, I remember a festive night with my embassy friends at the Gymnase, after a delightful dinner in their company, where they were having great success with *Jonathan*, an audacity which, I presume, defied the combined efforts of Burnand, Wyndham, and other accomplished transplanters of such fragile wares, for it has never seen the lights of London. When I got back to their glare—or, speaking by comparison after leaving Paris, to their dimness—it chanced that I was obliged to attend some club committee meetings, held late at night, during the time when double gangs of men were working at the theatre, and still engaged in pulling the old interior to pieces. There was a dreadful fascination in this work to me, and I could never resist, when walking home in the small hours after one of those protracted meetings, taking the Haymarket on my way just to peer through the chinks in the hoarding, and see the falling masses of timber which were being hurled from the upper parts into the once classic pit by the night workmen, in hideous dust and uproar: the effect being rather that of demons joyfully engaged in some destructive orgie. While this work of demolition was in progress, I remember one of the men describing the fleas they disturbed as being 'more like ponies'! Perhaps now and then I thought at those times whether I was wrong to have embarked in an undertaking of such cost and risk, for I was pledged to the trustees to spend ten thousand pounds upon their property to the satisfaction of their own architect, and knew already how far I meant to exceed my obligation.

There came a period in the work which certainly was not inspiriting. While its machinery was being lowered, and before it was relaid, the stage was a yawning cellar, the auditorium was a forest of scaffold-poles, supporting-planks, on which I walked many a dangerous distance, and everything, in fact, was chaos.

Strangely enough, at the very time his former home was being so completely destroyed, poor old Buckstone, whose health had for some years been fast failing, died at Sydenham. I confess to some feeling, which we both entertained when told of it, that at least he was spared seeing the house that had for so many years been his—where once he had secured what must have been fortune enough—demolished and rebuilt beyond his recognition. Buckstone!

What enjoyment his mere name recalls! How one began to laugh directly he spoke the simplest sentence, even before he came upon the scene; and when he entered how one roared out loud—a tribute the whole audience paid him as if it were his right! What an eye! what a mouth! He was the best comedian in his line I ever saw, and my youth owes much of its happiness to his ripe and overbrimming humour.

To tell an anecdote of Buckstone is nearly impossible; they must have all been printed. One night, years ago, at a party at Walter Gowing's, Mr. Dillon Croker, a well-known and admirable imitator of the prominent actors of the day, was amusing the guests in that way, when Mrs. Buckstone prevailed on him, after some difficulty, to give an imitation of her husband, who, she urged, was in another room, and really too deaf, in any case, to hear the fun. After a reluctant consent, and amidst roars of laughter, the reproduction of the favourite actor's peculiarities was most ably given. The laughter was loud enough to attract Buckstone's attention, and he entered the room in the middle of it, and stood close to me. Seeing the sort of amusement going on, for he knew the bent of the entertainer, whose back was towards him, he asked me in his funny way: 'Who's he imitating now?' 'You, sir,' I replied, stifling my laughter. 'Eh?' 'You, sir,' I repeated. 'Oh, me—ah, devilish good, I dare say! I could do it better myself!'

It was soon evident that *Duty* ought to be withdrawn, so we resolved to appear in some performances of *Ours* at the old theatre until our new home should be ready for us. The failing play therefore came to an end after a career of eight languid weeks, and perhaps it was only right that the last bill at the little house should bear the name of Robertson, to whom we owed so much of our success there. In these words we announced the 'Farewell revival at this theatre of *Ours*. Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's last appearances prior to the opening of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, under their management, at the beginning of the new year.' *Ours* was cast in this way: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Kemble; Angus MacAlister, Mr. H. B. Conway; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Lady Shendryn, Miss Le Thiere; Blanche Haye, Miss Marion Terry; and Mary Netley, Mrs. Bancroft.

This oft-tried friend again stood by us, and served to fill the little theatre until we left it.

We were perplexed as to what our opening programme in our new undertaking should be, no one being better aware than ourselves that our company had not the same strength as formerly for certain plays, the greatly increased number of theatres having so added to the difficulty of keeping the same actors together; *As You Like It*, the *School for Scandal*, *Money*, *Masks and Faces*, and *Old Heads and Young Hearts* being all discussed between us. With regard to the last-named comedy we wrote to the author, who

was then slowly recovering from a recent serious illness. The answer was, as usual, characteristic of the writer :

'Washington, *November* 7, 1879.

'My dear Bancroft,—I believe the right of *Old Heads and Young Hearts* belongs to Webster. For many years, from 1841 to 1860, I never looked after such rights, and let them slide. Webster picked them up somehow, and has since enjoyed them, rightly or wrongly, I don't know.

'I doubt whether I shall ever cross the ocean again. I am rusticating at Washington for a month or two, having recovered some strength, and am waiting now to know if my lease of life is out, or is to be renewed for another term. I have had notice to quit, but am arguing the point ("just like you," I think I hear you say), and nothing yet is settled between Nature and me.

'With kind love to Mrs. Bancroft, and true wishes for your success,—Believe me, sincerely yours, Dion Boucicault.'

Influenced by the remembrance that our own parts in it would be light, our choice fell finally on *Money*. We had to make special terms with the present Lord Lytton for its revival, as, by the law of copyright, the work would soon become public property—the forty-two years since its original production having then nearly expired ; so that this was the last run of the comedy for which fees were paid.

We strengthened our company to the best of the means at our disposal, but the five intervening years since its last revival rendered it impossible to recall some of the former well-remembered successes to the cast. Very elaborate scenery was talked over and arranged ; in short, every effort was made in all departments to outdo previous attempts in that direction. This involved a heavy strain of work—through every hour of the day I was at the beck and call of architect, scene-painters (several of whom were busy on our behalf in different parts of London), decorators, clerk of the works, stage-carpenters, costumiers, upholsterers, and the host of smaller folk employed *ad infinitum* in and about a theatre. My correspondence also greatly increased, and I had to play the long and arduous part of Hugh Chalcot in *Ours*, which required all my spirit every night. Afflicted as I had been for years with a ridiculous mania for doing much of other people's work in addition to my own, neither my position nor my state of mind could fairly be called worthy of envy. I cannot too gratefully acknowledge the cheerful support I found always at my side in Mrs. Bancroft, who is blessed with the philosophy of thought that 'most things happen for the best,' and that 'all will come right in the end ;' while I, under a quiet exterior, inwardly 'grizzle' unceasingly, until that end is manifest.

The chief features in my rough outlines of the new theatre, made

practical by Mr. Phipps, were the proscenium in the form of a large gold frame, and the abolition of the pit. I make this early allusion to the last idea to record many a view, from the giddy heights of scaffoldings and ladders, which I had of my wife's little figure gazing plaintively from where the footlights were to be, up to the circle which was to be our equivalent for a pit, and to which our old friends, by my ruthless act, were henceforth to be relegated; that was the one part of my scheme which frightened Mrs. Bancroft, and more than once she asked if even 'a little tiny pit were possible.' I was as fixed and determined in my views then, as I may, before resuming the subject later on, frankly say I should be now if the whole matter had to be begun again.

My other novelty—the frame—was quite original, and I may say here that, when at Homburg a few years later I found the new Opera House in Frankfort also had a proscenium much of the same formation, I was comforted to learn, upon prompt and careful inquiries, that its construction was later in date than the carrying out of my idea at the Haymarket. Since then, at the reconstructed Théâtre de la Monnaie, at Brussels, I have also been paid the compliment of reproduction of my notion.

The scheme was for a time involved in some difficulty, when I said: 'This is what the intention must combine: hidden footlights, which, when the curtain falls and is within three feet of them, must descend to make room for the heavy roller; and when the curtain is raised, the footlights must follow suit immediately, so that the stage is never perceptibly darkened in either case.' The answer was, 'Yes, that's all very well, but how is it to be carried out?' I replied, 'I haven't the faintest idea. I can only tell you *what* I want done, not *how* to do it.' After a succession of experiments and some trouble, the means were invented and executed by the master carpenter, Oliver Wales, in a manner that has worked successfully ever since.

I so seldom raise the veil which shields the private lives of the most public men, that I hardly like to mention in this book what, if I do, must be a sad page of it—the death of young Frank Toole at the age of twenty-three. There is no member of the calling he follows more loved and respected by his comrades than John Lawrence Toole. The highest and the humblest in our ranks shared a great sorrow, which, in the last month of this year, shattered his hopes and left him for years an altered man. It is not fit for me to write at all of the sad condition of our old friend through his own serious state of health, which added to the home grief, and I will end this allusion to the sorrow by saying that the most solemn, the most truly tragic contrast I ever saw, was this favourite comedian, who now was but the sick and afflicted father, at his dead son's grave.

Perhaps the following letter addressed by me to the *World* will sufficiently explain itself: 'Some kind friends, we learn, have con-

ceived the idea of giving Mrs. Bancroft and myself a little present at the close of our management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre. But what was intended as a private surprise has, by unexpected publicity, assumed the shape of a semi-public testimonial. Before the matter proceeds further, therefore, I feel compelled, on the part of my wife and myself, respectfully but firmly to decline what, had it remained in its original shape, we should have been proud and pleased to accept. I am sure that in acting thus our motives will not be misconstrued, and that the friends with whom the idea originated will know that we fully appreciate the feelings that prompted it.'

The work grew heavier and heavier at the end. The Italian workmen who were laying the mosaic floorings in various parts of the theatre even remained at their posts throughout the Christmas holidays, when we were free to make a calm inspection of how things really stood—at other times the Babel of sounds distracted and confused us. All was going well, and we felt able with certainty to fix the opening night. The rehearsals of *Money*, which began in peace on the stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, were ended in tumult at the Haymarket. At last all was ready, the finishing-touch to the beauty of the decorations being given by Mrs. Bancroft's ivory-coloured satin curtains. The weather unfortunately, was vile, with an exceptional visitation of dense, cold fogs.

I have not yet mentioned that we were fortunate enough to find an excellent tenant for the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Mr. Edgar Bruce, who arranged to take possession of the premises directly we vacated them, which was on Thursday, January 29th, when our long and prosperous career there came to an end. After the final performance (which certainly was appropriate in an atmospheric sense, for the Crimean winter depicted in the third act of *Ours* seemed a reminder of the frost outside), we were summoned again and again before the footlights, and at last I spoke these words :

'Ladies and gentlemen,—In taking our leave, after nearly fifteen years' management, and fifteen years of very hard work, in this theatre, where many of the happiest hours of perhaps the brightest years of our lives have been passed, a few farewell words may be expected from us. Forgive me if, on Mrs. Bancroft's part and my own, I am only able to limit them to a reminder—and I hope the reminder will not be an unwelcome one—that this is not "Good-bye," but only "*Au revoir*." One compliment I must gratefully acknowledge, the presence to-night—and under the greatest difficulties in this dreadful weather—of many kind friends who have come to see the last of us in our old home, and who, I believe, will be with us on Saturday to wish us well in our new enterprise. In conclusion, Mrs. Bancroft and myself most heartily wish Mr. Bruce, who will be our successor here, all the good fortune that we have enjoyed.'

Mrs. Bancroft was much affected at bidding good-bye to a home so full of pleasant memories, so rich in artistic recollections, as the following words of hers will show :

'Were I to write till doomsday I could not convey the true state of my feelings as the last nights of our management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre came nearer and nearer. I could not sleep ; my heart was sick. The prospect of having to say farewell to the dear little house, every brick of which I loved, was a sad one for me. I went there day after day, and wandered from room to room quite alone. If there had been a listener, he would have heard my audible words addressed to the silent walls, which seemed to look reproachfully at me, and to say, "After all these years of service, are you going to leave us?" I here confess that if it could have been possible, when the time for our parting drew near, I would have remained in my old home, leaving Mr. Bancroft to manage the Haymarket Theatre. I threw out a hint to him that we might conduct the two houses, but of course it was a wild notion suggested by the state of my feelings at the time ; and, on reflection, it would have been more than folly, for the management of one leading theatre is enough, and often too much, nowadays.

'Never was a parting between two old friends more bitter than that between me and my dear home. My faithful servant, who throughout the twenty years' management personally attended me, can testify to my emotion, when, after my husband's farewell words, I left the little stage for ever, rushed up to my dressing-room, and cried bitterly. Even now, after a long lapse of years, I sometimes wander in the direction of the little theatre, looking so desolate, neglected and deserted, to meditate upon the ruin of a happy past.'

AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

Saturday, January 31st, 1880, was the eventful date fixed for the beginning of our new theatrical life, and we had the pleasure of being allowed to hand the proceeds (as announced) of our first performance at the Haymarket to the widow of the late Mr. Buckstone.

Just before I began to dress, Henry Irving was announced to me, having found his way to the stage-door, in spite of the weather, on his road to his own work. He was greatly struck with the change in the theatre, and especially admired the new curtain (so beautifully painted by Daniel White and John O'Connor), and the Shakespearian pictures, by J. D. Watson and F. Smith. We two stood together in the balcony, where he shook my hand in friendship, and wished us 'luck' : a few minutes before the doors were opened to the public in the densest, cruellest fog that, perhaps, even London ever knew. Many are the stories one could tell of journeys to and from the Haymarket that night ; for how the audience ever reached

their seats, and how the company all got there to act, really was a marvel.

The chief parts in Lord Lytton's comedy were cast as follows: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Sir John Vesey, Bart., Mr. Odell; Sir Frederick Blount, Bart., Mr. Bancroft; Captain Dudley Smooth, Mr. Archer; Mr. Graves, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. H. B. Conway; Mr. Stout, Mr. Kemble; Mr. Sharp, Mr. C. Brookfield; An old Member of the Club, Mr. Vollaire; Lady Franklin, Mrs. Bancroft; Georgina Vesey, Miss Linda Dietz; Clara Douglas, Miss Marion Terry.

To take the events of that opening night in proper sequence, I must begin with the Pit Question, and the riot that occurred when the curtain rose. Anonymous reports had reached me that there would most likely be a disturbance. I was sanguine enough, however, to hope that the following advertisement issued beforehand, and the nature of the accommodation offered in place of the old pit, would have prevented anything of the kind. Those hopes were vain:

'As some disappointment may be felt at the abolition of the pit, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft deem it necessary to explain the alteration.

'With the present expenses of a first-class theatre, it is impossible to give up the floor of the house—its most remunerative portion—to low-priced seats, and the management, being unwilling to place any part of the audience in close and confined space under the balcony, the only alternative was to allot to the frequenters of the pit the tier usually devoted to the upper boxes, and now called the second circle. In carrying out the structural alterations of the theatre, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft have, they hope, specially attended to the comfort of visitors to these seats by raising the ceiling, building a new stone staircase, a refreshment-room, and by removing all obstacles to a clear view of the stage.'

Naturally enough, I think it may be expected that I should here express some views on this then important subject, and tell what led me to the bold measure of daring to abolish the pit, more especially from the Haymarket Theatre, which had been long known to boast, and truly enough, the possession of the best and most comfortable pit ever to be found in a playhouse, from the reason that it did not go under the dress circle.

To begin, it is perhaps necessary to remind young play-goers that the pit in the old days occupied the entire floor of the theatre, extending to the orchestra, and as the charge for admission in the leading houses was three shillings and sixpence, the pit quite earned its title of being 'the backbone of the theatre.' The dress circle and private boxes were the resort of the better classes, the wealthy, or the fastidious. The modern stall was then unknown. Gradually this luxury was introduced. Row by row, very insidiously, the

cushioned chairs encroached upon the narrow benches, which, year after year, were removed further and further from the stage, until at last, in many theatres, all that was left of the old-fashioned pit was a dark, low-ceilinged place hidden away under the dress circle, which, by contrast with its former proud state, seemed but a kind of cellar, or reminder of the black-hole of Calcutta.

That thousands of earnest play-goers would far rather sit there in heat and discomfort than go up aloft to better accommodation I don't doubt for a moment, nor do I for another moment deny that I should very likely find myself of the party under their circumstances ; but that seems to me outside the question. Matters had entirely changed. The pit had long lost, in most West End theatres, the possibility of being the support it used to prove, owing to the managers of them having, row by row, robbed it of its power, and made the stalls instead their 'backbone.' This grew to be eminently the case with our management, which could not have endured without high-priced admission.

I don't think anything I might add to these remarks would advance the argument, so I will return to the hooting and howling which greeted the raising of the curtain, mingled with noisy cries of 'Where's the pit?' At the great disadvantage of being dressed for Sir Frederick Blount, in which I wore a flaxen foppish wig and pink complexion, I walked upon the stage and faced the anger of the few who made the noise, which quite drowned the friendly greeting of the many. Utterly unprepared what to say, for I had disregarded the anonymous warnings, I believe I owed something to the manner in which I spoke the few broken sentences I was allowed, through the tumult, to utter, and to never showing during that *mauvais quart d'heure* (to be exact, more than twenty minutes) the least sign of temper. What I said was not of much moment, and very likely my attempts to speak were neither soothing nor judicious ; but I am not of a 'knuckling-under' disposition, and, at least, I thought myself justified in claiming the respect of the audience. Unfortunately the diversion tended largely to disconcert the actors, and to add greatly to the nervousness due to the position of all concerned.

Most things have their comic side, and so even had this little riot. Our relations with Mr. J. S. Clarke throughout the transfer of the lease, with all the business it involved, had been always pleasant, and we begged him to allow us to place a private box at his disposal. He had arranged with other members of his family to meet his son outside the theatre, but was late in arrival through the dense fog. When his son reached the theatre he ran to the box, and saw, through the little window in the door of it, that it was still unoccupied ; and also that I was standing on the stage and facing the audience. He went back to the portico, hoping every instant for his father's arrival ; for several minutes there was no sign of him. After a while, fearing he might have missed him through the fog,

there being several doors adjoining, young Clarke again went to the box, to find it still empty, and to still see me, through the glass window, standing in front of the footlights as before. Such part of the audience as he could observe were applauding violently. In this way, for a long while, he was occupied; going to and from the back of the private box and the front of the theatre, always to find the former still untenanted, and always to see me still in the same position. At last he ran against his people emerging from a cab, when, half an hour behind their time, they reached the theatre. Seizing his father's arm, he said, 'Come along, come along, or you'll miss the end of the most wonderful ovation! Bancroft, to my certain knowledge, has been bowing to the audience for the last twenty minutes. *No actor in this world ever had so magnificent a reception!*' When they entered their box they could *hear* as well as *see* my greeting.

MRS. BANCROFT'S COMMENTS.

From a tiny square hole in my dressing-room I could see all that went on behind the scenes, and could hear everything that was said on the stage; while Mr. Bancroft was going through that terrible ordeal, my profile might have been seen at the aforesaid square aperture very much resembling a postage stamp. The tumult became so awful that at last I rushed downstairs and walked about wringing my hands, and wondering how it would all end. If the malcontents could but have seen me, I am sure they would have ceased. I at length resolved that if the uproar lasted another three minutes I would myself address the audience, and ask them to listen to me for the sake of 'Auld Lang Syne,' and to say that after so long a service I ought to be permitted to dictate to them, so to speak, and by gentle reasoning bring about a reconciliation between us. But the noise and hooting ended, and my speech was unnecessary; my next dread was that I too should be received with groans and hisses, and I was cold with fear; but my reception when I made my appearance was so great, the welcome so hearty and prolonged, that, combined with all the nervous excitement, it gave me courage, and I acted better than I had done for some time. The night was one of the most awful I can remember; a short time before the doors were opened I went round the beautiful theatre, and could scarcely see the decorations through the black veil; the elements indeed were far from propitious, and, of course, this calamity, for I can call it nothing else, sadly helped to fan the flame of discontent and temper amongst the pittites, and our positions for a time were not to be envied.

During the evening I had received many beautiful bouquets, which it was impossible to take home, as no carriage could fetch us, and no cab would take a fare; in fact, it was safer to walk, so I left my flowers in charge of my dresser; and our servant, who had come from the house to help us home, walked ahead of us with a

white bouquet in his hand to serve as a kind of beacon. There were many curious incidents connected with that eventful night. A party of four started from Putney in clear weather, but suddenly found themselves enveloped in the black fog on nearing town; they managed to reach the theatre, but when the performance was over were persuaded to make their way for the night to a friend's house in Bayswater, where the carriage and horse might be accommodated in the mews. After a tedious journey of some hours they arrived at the house, but found the mews more than full of other befogged victims. At their wits' end, they were at length forced to this expedient: the carriage was left outside in the road, and the horse (a valuable animal just recovered from a long sickness) and man passed the night in the hall of the house!

A curious incident also happened to our dear friend, Dr. George Bird, who, after leaving the theatre, of course followed his maxim to 'always walk home from the play,' a task, however, by no means easy on this occasion. Living in Welbeck Street, he eventually crossed Oxford Street safely, and then felt convinced that he was somewhere parallel with his own house; but whether he was struggling along in Harley Street, Wimpole Street, or Welbeck Street, he felt utterly unable to determine. At length the brilliant idea occurred to him, that in this land of doctors, if he groped his way to some door which carried a brass-plate, the name on it would be sure, by the aid of a match, to tell him whereabouts he really was. He at once carried out his plan, and in the first doorway he entered, found a brass-plate. He then lighted a match, and *read his own name!*

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

I was inundated with communications on both sides of this vexed Pit Question, many of the letters being from occupants of the upper circles on the first night, and, nearly all, full of expressions of sympathy, whether the writers of them agreed with me or not. I will dismiss the subject with one important letter which came later on, through the distance it had to travel. The writer's long connection with the Haymarket Theatre alone would give it weight:

'San Francisco, California, *March* 25, 1880.

'DEAR BANCROFT,—I'm a poor hand at letter-writing; I've such hundreds to answer that I hurry-scurry through them as best I can; but I *must* send you a scrawl to congratulate you on the admirable way in which you quelled the disgraceful disturbance on your first night at the Haymarket. Leaving your snug little theatre where you had done so much—so very much—to improve our art, and where you were so brilliantly successful, seemed to me a most dangerous move; but I admire your pluck in taking the Haymarket, and in doing precisely what I advised Buckstone and the trustees to do ten or twelve years ago—*i.e.*, abolish the pit. There was no

other way of making the theatre pay with the risk and heavy expenses of first-class management and first-class artists.

'I most sincerely hope and believe that your daring experiment will be crowned with the success that you and Mrs. Bancroft so richly deserve.—Sincerely yours, E. A. SOTHERN.'

While the fact passes through my mind, let me recall the wonderfully hearty and really affectionate greeting given to Mrs. Bancroft when she stepped upon the stage as Lady Franklin. I would also like to add that my own reception as an actor was unmingled with less pleasant sounds. The performance was full of faults on the opening night, some of them being due to the strange ground and want of rehearsal in the new theatre. As Dutton Cook aptly wrote, 'It was a night of nervous excitement, and the players hardly yet understood the perspective, or the *optique du théâtre*, of their new position.' Mrs. Bancroft was, I think, the only member of the company who entirely controlled her nervousness. Many shortcomings soon were remedied as we grew accustomed to the great change in our surroundings.

An extract from a letter written by a cultured and travelled well-known man, shall represent the many flattering remarks that reached us about the theatre :

'Having seen the interior of very many theatres in Europe, I feel convinced there is nothing either in design, decoration, comfort, and *tout ensemble* to equal the "Haymarket." It would be ridiculous, of course, to compare or contrast your house with those of magnitude like the "Scala" at Milan ; but, viewing it as a house of comedy, it has not, in my humble judgment, a rival.

'The proscenium and drop-scene were simply perfection. The delicate tints of the panels, the extreme finish of the paintings in them, the wealth of gilding, and the general harmony of colouring, display an artistic merit of rare excellence.

'In the distribution of the seats there is a boldness and liberality in apportioning the space which should be an example to others for all time.

'In a word, it would be difficult for professional cavillers to pick a hole in this, the most tasteful theatre in Europe.

'It was to be expected there would be a little malicious rowdyism about the pit ; public men must always prepare to encounter opposition when they innovate, be it for good or evil. Still, the heartfelt applause of nineteen-twentieths of a brilliant audience must have been token enough of the superb work you have achieved, and of the exceptional reputation you and Mrs. Bancroft have earned as the inaugurators and chief exponents of a new school of dramatic art and of theatrical excellence.'

I add one more extract, from a letter written to me by the distinguished French comedian, Saint Germain :

'Que son amenagement est bien entendu. Ah, cette fois ci. Bravo, et sans restriction. Cet orchestre qu'on ne voit pas, cette rampe presqu'imperceptible, cette absence du manteau d'Arlequin, ce cadre contournant la scène ! Le spectateur est devant un tableau dont les personnages parlent et agissent. C'est parfait pour l'illusion et pour le plaisir artistique.'

The Prince and Princess of Wales were at Sandringham on the opening night, or would have been present, but witnessed the third performance in our new house, when, fortunately, King Fog suspended his rule and left the beauties of the theatre clear to view. His Royal Highness expressed many kind wishes, and requested to be taken over the theatre to see the great changes in it.

As I was making some arrangements for this purpose, I turned to Oliver Wales, the master carpenter, and, in reference to a question, said to him, quite unconsciously, 'Which way, Wales?' The Prince was close to my side, and the smile which played over his face as I spoke, told me of the accidental double-meaning of my words, and, it may be, they amused his Royal Highness. Such fears for the future as the pit disturbance gave me were soon set at rest, for any after objections were silent, and the receipts of the theatre showed the difference between the old and new houses very solidly. A series of morning performances of *Money* was started, and all went well.

The reader will doubtless welcome a pause that lets me tell of other things. A short time afterwards, a brilliant supper-party was given by Irving on the Lyceum stage, which, with incredible speed, was transformed into a banqueting-room, to celebrate the hundredth performance of the *Merchant of Venice*. On this occasion the late Lord Houghton proposed his host's health in a speech more remarkable for a caustic objection to the view taken of Shylock's character than for the platitudes to be expected on so festive an occasion, and which fell like a bomb-shell upon the amazed listeners. The actor, it will be remembered by his many distinguished hearers, very cleverly countered the remarks by the way he happily turned the words of his acknowledgment. It was altogether a memorable evening.

Although in earlier life so delightful a writer as Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton's keen wit has often proved a wonderful weapon; never more so, perhaps, than when, in answer to the boast of a well-known woman of fashion that 'She had often had two men at her feet at one time,' he asked if they were *chiropodists*.

A few days later, *Daniel Rochat* was produced by Sardou at the Français, with that incomparable actor of certain parts, Delaunay, as the hero, when, alas! our hopes concerning it were blighted. I could not leave our newly-started theatre to see the *première*, but was represented by a distinguished friend, then resident in Paris, who was not only a perfect French scholar, but one in whose judg-

ment I had great confidence. The work proved to be more a theological discussion than a drama, and certainly would not have been acceptable on the English stage, even had the difficulty as to license been overcome. Sardou, however, was very angry at my refusal of the play, and I doubt if he has ever quite forgiven me for so firmly disputing his belief in it, although it proved a failure in Paris.

Our anticipation of this play being so suddenly and completely wrecked, I turned to a leaning I had for years towards the old comedy, *Le Mari à la Campagne*, long known in England as the *Serious Family*, and in which I had occasionally appeared, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, as Captain Murphy Maguire. I sought an interview with Mr. F. C. Burnand about it, who thought the notion of a new version good, if some motive power other than religion could be suggested on which to hang fresh treatment. Suddenly, as these happy inspirations always come, he hit upon the æsthetic craze, then rampant, on which to found his play, and we at once went on with the scheme. Burnand's first wish was to make the leading part a Frenchman, while my idea was to turn him into an American—which Burnand soon afterwards agreed with. A correspondence between us shows on what different footings the question stood—actors, as varied as Monsieur Marius and Charles Wyndham, being at different times suggested for it—the eventual decision being that the character should be written for me. One remark of Burnand's, from a letter informing us that he was ordered off to Aix-les-Bains for a few weeks, I must bestow on the reader, in which the writer says, 'I am (in spite of all exercise) a slave to liver—*i.e.*, a livery servant.'

In the spring of this year, I sat to Count Gleichen for the companion to the bust of Mrs. Bancroft—which was shown in the *foyer* at the opening of the theatre for a short time before being sent to the Royal Academy, where both works were exhibited; subsequently I presented them to the Garrick Club. I also gave some sittings for a portrait to poor Carlo Pellegrini, apropos of which I received this characteristic note from the accomplished 'Ape':

'Studio, 53, Mortimer Street, Regent Street, W., *Thursday Evening.*

'DEAR BANCROFT,—I have sent your fac-simile to the Grosvenor. I hope you will be well hanged—I mean the portrait.—Truly yours, C. PELLEGRINI.'

We soon felt, from experience, that the 'runs' of plays would, of necessity, be much shorter, and the work in consequence much harder at the Haymarket than at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

Failing a new play, we decided to follow *Money* with a revival of *School*, and learn at once the important fact to us—whether the Robertsonian mine was likely to extend to the Haymarket, or if the vein was a thing of the past, and, so far as we were concerned,

quite worked out. Our own faith in it was strong, although but little shared by others when we announced our intention.

We played *Money* for three months, during quite two of which the houses continued full; and in this short time the result surpassed a longer and, apparently, more successful run of the comedy at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

On the evening of Saturday, May 1st, we changed our programme and risked the experiment of a Robertson comedy on the larger stage. There was no repetition of any disturbance about the lost pit, which we thought a possible visitation for several 'first nights' to come; the old friend was welcomed with enthusiasm to its new home, the audience in the second circle proving that they could laugh as loudly, and applaud as heartily, upstairs as down. The comedy, which had been last produced by us in 1873, was cast as follows: Lord Beaufoy, Mr. H. B. Conway; Dr. Sutcliffe, Mr. Kemble; Beau Farintosh, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Jack Poyntz, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Krux, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Mrs. Sutcliffe, Mrs. Canninge; Bella, Miss Marion Terry; and Naomi Tighe, Mrs. Bancroft.

There will be interest in the statement that among the schoolgirls during this run were the now popular Miss Kate Rorke and Miss Mellon, a daughter of Mrs. Alfred Mellon, both of whom thus first appeared upon the stage.

This revival, instead of resulting in our destruction, as we freely grant it might have done, proved an assurance that the commercial side of our enterprise at least was secured, while the reception it received was worthy any new play, and the demand for seats as vigorous, leaving, indeed, no doubt that this delicate little comedy, fragile in plot, idyllic in treatment, would maintain the position before referred to, of being the most successful of all our plays.

On looking back at a book of engagements, it tells us that May of this year was a busy month, but we need allusion only to things theatrical. On the fifth we went to a morning performance at the Court Theatre, and for the first time saw Modjeska in *Heartsease*, a version of *La Dame aux Camellias*, in which her acting of the frail heroine—although differently conceived—we thought, rivalled the superb rendering of Sarah Bernhardt. On the seventh, there was a remarkable performance given in French of *L'Aventurière*, when nearly all the parts were taken by English actors, including Mr. Beerbohm Tree and Miss Genevieve Ward, the only exception being M. Marius. The fourteenth brought this note from Irving:

'15*a*, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W., *May* 14, 1880.

'The happiest returns of the day, my dear Bancroft, and may prosperity and happiness always be yours.

'An old engagement obliges me to go to supper, but I'll get away in time for *one* cigar.

'No more, by heaven, for to-morrow is a busy day with both of us.*—Affectionately yours, HENRY IRVING.

'P.S.—I think this pocket-book is very pretty.'

It was about this time that Irving offered me a compliment I have always valued, and but for the strain of work I had undergone, which made me already count the days, like an anxious schoolboy, to the commencement of my holiday, I should have been tempted to accept. He asked me to play Château Renaud, if only for a time, in his intended production of the *Corsican Brothers*, a part I always had a hankering after. Perhaps, before my career as an actor is finally closed, it may be that the pleasure of appearing with my old friend will not be denied me. On a later day came a visit from Sothern, who had just returned to England, but sadly changed. Of course no one could better understand the alteration in the theatre than old Haymarket actors, who always failed to trace how the building could ever have borne its former shape. Sothern was particularly struck with all he saw on either side the curtain, and wished that in his bright days there the house had been as we had made it. We don't remember whether the once far-famed 'Dundreary' ever acted again, but month by month he seemed to lose his strength, and fade away as he sought for health at different seaside places.

Sothern's greatly-altered looks remind me that the illness with which poor Honey was stricken about a year before this time had lately made fierce strides, and news reached us that he was sinking fast. A sad journey to his house to see him once more, and learn how matters stood there, was taken together by three old friends of his, Irving, Toole, and myself. The dear fellow's efforts, when we were at his bedside, to make us understand he knew us all, were very painful. Once we just gathered that he framed the words 'Sir Frederick,' addressed to me in remembrance of the part I had played with him so many times in *Money*. The next day was his last; and not much longer than twelve months after he stood by my side at John Clarke's grave in Highgate Cemetery, wondering who amongst us would be the next, he joined him there. Poor Honey's long illness, and other troubles, had left his affairs in a melancholy state, which the wonderful charity ever conspicuous among actors for their afflicted brethren relieved by a fund, of which Charles Santley, Henry Irving and I were made trustees.

The scythe of Death was this summer indeed busy in the drama's ranks, for almost directly, and within a brief time of each other, passed away two of its valued literary workers—the courtly veteran, J. R. Planché, who was ever cheery, even when worldly troubles overtook him at the age of eighty, and that accomplished playwright, Tom Taylor.

* In allusion to morning performances the next day.

To revert from so sad a subject to the mention of such distinguished followers of Momus as the Coquelins, *aîné* and *cadet*, let me say that these clever brothers saw *School* during this revival. Coquelin afterwards wrote to me :

'CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,—Vous avez un excellent théâtre que vous dirigez en maître . . . et en maître artiste . . . que pouvez vous désirer de plus ?—Votre ami, C. COQUELIN.'

It was pleasant, some years later, to find their impressions published in Paris in *La Vie Humoristique*, the account of their visit being admirably written by Coquelin *cadet*, and of which we append the concluding sentences :

'Les décors sont exécutés de main de maître. C'est le triomphe de l'exactitude. Les comédiens sont excellents. M. Bancroft joue dans la pièce un rôle de grand gommeux anglais à monocle, et rien n'égale son élégance et sa stupidité. Madame Bancroft joue la pensionnaire gaie ; cette petite femme est un mélange d'Alphonsine et de Chaumont—gaie, pimpante, mordane et d'une adresse ! . . . C'est la *great attraction* du Théâtre de Hay-Market.

'Après, je reviens rapidement en cab ("*Hansom*") à mon hôtel, et je me demande en chemin pourquoi les cabs vont si vite ? C'est tout simple : les cabs vont très vite parce que les cochers les poussent derrière.'

There is little more to tell before the season ended. We had resolved, on taking the theatre, by way of compensation for the extra work, to underlet it for some of the autumn months, so that we might extend our holiday. Mr. J. S. Clarke this year became our tenant, and decided during our absence to produce a new play by Dion Boucicault, called a *Bridal Tour*.

At the end of July Mr. Burnand read the first and second acts of his comedy, and delighted us with his work. No cleverer dialogue had we heard for many a day, while the characters were admirably adapted, it seemed to us, to their proposed exponents. This helped much to cheer our departure for the Engadine ; since the extraordinary success of *School*, the result of which entirely passed all the hopes I had formed of the theatre's possibilities, justified our resuming the run of it, when we began work again in November. The season closed brilliantly. Never was the saying 'A bad beginning makes a good ending' more amply verified. I have told how, on the opening night, some occupants of the second circle were discontented and riotous ; let my postscript on the last night be that they cheered us again and again with cries of 'Come back soon !' On the following evening, Mrs. Bancroft had the pleasure of reading 'Major Namby' at the Lyceum Theatre at the close of Henry Irving's season, and the next morning we started for

Pontresina, having the welcome companionship, as a fellow-traveller, of a dear and affectionate friend in J. C. Parkinson, which made our journey memorably happy.

Again we had a hearty welcome to the little village, which was this year for the first time honoured by a visit from the Prince and Princess Christian, who were accompanied by the two young princes. Mrs. Bancroft had the opportunity of nursing the young Prince Christian during a throat affection, which earned for her from their Royal Highnesses, at the time, the title of 'Dr. Bancroft.'

We yielded to a request to further aid the Church, and having the great advantage of Arthur Cecil's companionship, resolved, in addition to readings, songs, and recitations, to act *The Vicarage*, finding great help also in the presence and good nature of two distinguished musicians, Mr. Shakespeare, and Mr. Goring Thomas; while Mr. Parkinson was pressed into the service for the small part of the Vicar's man-servant, which Mrs. Bancroft rendered more important by writing some additional speeches.

This was a very successful entertainment, and, as the tickets were ten francs each, realized a large sum, which our treasurer, Dr. Ludwig, the clever and popular Pontresina *medico*, handed over, to the great advantage of its good object. The Prince and Princess Christian honoured us with their presence, and all the available vehicles were chartered by visitors from St. Moritz. A gentleman, who was staying at the Roseg Hotel, carried a large copy of the programme to the summit of Piz Languard, and there attached it to a pole, earning the title of 'Bill-Poster to the Higher Alps.'

Moderate excursions always satisfied our mountaineering ambition. Mrs. Bancroft was quite contented in having accomplished the Diavolezza tour, while a climb up the easiest of the snow-peaks, Piz Corvatsch, was my chief accomplishment. Some of these excursions this year were made in the companionship of Mr. Parkinson, and one day we all three went together to the Alp Grüm, a visit Mrs. Bancroft shall describe in her own words: 'We started at an early hour, carrying a simple luncheon with us, consisting of substantial sandwiches and wine. Mr. Parkinson, a keen admirer of beautiful scenery, constantly expressed his delight at the views we passed on the way. On reaching the summit, we all sat down on a bench, and while we gazed on the lovely panorama before us, prepared to unpack our lunch. During this operation, Mr. Parkinson, quite lost in admiration of the scene, went into ecstasies, and gave vent to his rapture in words, "Oh, this is indeed divine! *What* a sky! *Look* at that exquisitely peaceful valley, wrapped in rich verdure, and surrounded by those grand, snow-clad mountains. Where is there a painter who can reproduce *such* colours, *such* tints, *such* shadows? No, Nature will *not* be imitated! How *noble* are those rugged peaks; grand, impregnable, defiant! This is indeed a heavenly spot for romantic meditation." Then, sud-

denly looking at the lunch, "*Oh, the brutes! I ordered beef, and they've given me ham!*" The transition from poetry to sandwiches was most amusing.'

How we enjoyed this long holiday! How we delighted in the feeling that Paris, this time, did not mean the end of it! We went about, and saw more of the gay city than we ever had the chance to know before. One day we drove to Père la Chaise, passing on the way the prison of La Roquette, where the guillotine is used, when a French jury has the now rare courage to find no 'extenuating circumstances' to save a culprit from its knife. We, of course, went to gaze upon the tomb of Abelard and Heloise, and other vaults almost as celebrated: then, after wandering in the mid-day heat up and down its countless alleys, we emerged upon the broad main path of the cemetery, at the end of which, above its noble flight of steps, we saw a distant crowd and the figure of a man violently gesticulating in its midst. We thought ourselves indeed in luck; there was evidently a big funeral taking place, and we just in time to hear one of the customary orations delivered at the obsequies by some eminent Frenchman. We hurried down the path, and up the steep stone steps, hearing, nearer and nearer, the voice of the speaker, and noticing, more and more, the rapt attention of his listeners. Suddenly, as we got quite close, we found to our great surprise that the speech was being made in our own language, and as we panted up the last few steps, exhausted by heat and fatigue, we just caught these words: 'Yes, that is the tomb of the great Cherubini; there lie the remains of the distinguished actor, Talma; and there' (in an undertone, pointing us out) 'are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Haymarket Theatre!' The crowd consisted of a 'self-conducted' tourist party, and we both felt fit to sink into one of the open graves!

After our stay in Paris, and before fulfilling an intention to visit Malvern, we halted for a few days in London, chiefly to hear Burnand read the third act of his play, which we felt to be considerably behind the other two in merit, and required, we thought, a good deal of altering. The old-fashioned inn, the Foley Arms, so delightfully placed, was our home at Malvern, and we passed a pleasant, quiet time there; part of it being devoted to a mild insight into the mysteries of hydropathy, under the guidance of the amiable successor to Dr. Gully, the high-priest of the water-cure; part to long walks

> 'Round about the Malvern Hills,
> Where man may live as long as he wills;'

charming drives to beautiful Eastnor, to Worcester to see the potteries and Cathedral, and all the country round, in those canary-coloured carriages, as quaint-looking as the drivers in their blue coats and white beaver hats (only exchanged on Sundays for a black one) which the Foley Arms affects; part in receiving and returning early proofs of Burnand's progressing comedy.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SEASON OF 1880-81.

The 'Windsor Strollers'—Some good amateurs—Resumption with *School* and *The Vicarage*—Burnand's comedy in rehearsal—A carriage accident—*The Colonel* relegated to the Prince of Wales's—*Masks and Faces* in preparation—'Black Tuesday'—The Haymarket that evening—Death of Sothern—Love of practical joking—His opinion of Mrs. Bancroft—Revival of *Masks and Faces*—Alternation of Triplet and Colley Cibber with Arthur Cecil—Letter from Mr. Gladstone—Death of Lord Beaconsfield—Shakespeare on popular favourites—A morning call—Edwin Booth and Henry Irving—The Meiningen Company—*Society* and *Good for Nothing* revived—Letter from Ludwig Barnay—A practical joke by Mr. Bancroft—More wanderings abroad—A story of Como—On the sea and in the East—Impressions of Gibraltar—Malta—Syra—Smyrna and Constantinople.

At the close of our long and delightful holiday we had the curious experience of seeing Robertson's comedy, *Play*, acted by those clever amateurs the 'Windsor Strollers,' at the odd little theatre in the royal borough, since, we hear, destroyed. We distinctly recall the excellent comic acting of Captain Gooch, and the ease and *sang-froid* of Augustus Spalding; while the Hon. Mrs. Wrottesley reminded us strongly of the late Mrs. Frank Matthews, and played with the skill of a practised actress. One of Sir Charles Young's little pieces, called *For Her Child's Sake*, was acted on the same evening by the lamented author and Lady Monckton, who was then justly considered the first amateur of 'leading' parts; she has since proved her undoubted and conspicuous ability, by her admirable performance in *Jim the Penman*, when she joined the professional ranks.

We have never had the pleasure of seeing the other 'crack team,' the 'Old Stagers,' although we more than once received an invitation for the 'Canterbury Week,' which our holiday abroad compelled us to forego, so we can only regret not knowing, except by hearsay, how clever our old friends Sir Henry de Bathe and Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane are as actors. Quintin Twiss we have seen act several times, and especially recall an amateur pantomime at the Gaiety, called *Herne the Hunter*, rendered memorable by W. S. Gilbert appearing as harlequin, William Yardley as clown, and the veteran Thomas Knox Holmes as pantaloon. Other excellent amateurs whom we have seen on the stage certainly comprise Lady Sebright, Lady Archibald Campbell, the Hon. Alec Yorke, the Ponsonbys, and Charles Colnaghi.

While on this subject we may add that many admirable and successful professional actors, who might easily be named, won their spurs on the amateur stage.

We returned to work in November, resuming the run of *School*, and acting also with Arthur Cecil in *The Vicarage*, the dear old-

fashioned stay-at-home couple, and the wandering friend who for the time so upsets the tranquillity of their home. The only change in the cast of *School* was in the part of the usher, Krux, which Mr. Brookfield now took in place of Mr. Forbes-Robertson, giving an able but novel reading of the objectionable creature.

Mr. Burnand read his comedy in the green-room a few days afterwards. All sorts of titles had been thought of for the new work, two of which we remember, *Tom* and *The Colonel*. Seldom has heartier laughter at a reading been heard than the bursts which greeted the two first acts, but the comparative weakness of the third was manifest both then and at the subsequent rehearsals. A very elaborate æsthetic scene, and equally telling furniture, with the same characteristics, was prepared, and some of the parts would certainly have been particularly well acted — to judge by the rehearsals, which proceeded daily.

During their progress an unfortunate accident befell us. We were driving a pair of young and rather restive horses, which were giving the coachman some trouble ; the weather was bad, and heavy flakes of snow were falling. While in earnest talk about the play, we suddenly grew conscious that we were going at great speed. This happened in Goodge Street. There one of the horses got a leg over the pole, and in his efforts to extricate himself kicked his companion, and the pair became maddened. We were now nearing Middlesex Hospital. Things grew worse from the state of the wet wooden pavement, and the coachman found himself powerless to pull the horses up, so did his best to save us by driving them into a coal-waggon : this being empty, we cannoned from it, but severely injured the horse that drew it. The concussion, however, stopped the direction of our course, and the poor beasts dashed on to the pavement and into the railings of the private house adjoining the chemist's at the corner of Berners Street. The railings were smashed in, and the stones at their base torn up. Our descent into the area was only prevented by a further flat railing or grating, which enclosed it, still to be found in some old houses. The brougham, by the force of all this, was turned over on its side, which helped to bring the horses, wounded and entangled in their broken harness, to a standstill. After a while, we were dragged out through the window, fortunately unhurt, so far as flesh-wounds went. The coachman was released from a perilous position more frightened than injured, for he never afterwards drove with his previous courage.

Although there was no doctor's bill to pay (if we may say so without slight to veterinary surgeons), the reaction from the excitement and alarm dwelt on our nerves for some time.

It was singular that this really alarming accident did not reach the newspapers, while a few months previously a broken rein and a consequent but momentary confusion, which was arrested by the prompt action of a policeman (certainly in the heart of town), was

placarded in the evening papers almost as soon as the occurrence took place.

It is well to go from grave to gay when one can, so the sequel to this carriage incident shall be told by Mrs. Bancroft: 'I remember my husband, who is very cool-headed in times of peril, putting all the windows down and then holding me very tight until the crash came. With a feeling of thankfulness that we escaped from what might have been, for us, very serious, I will tell what happened afterwards. I was dragged through the carriage-window by a kindly navvy, whose black face almost frightened me out of the poor senses I had left. Mr. Bancroft, whose hat, I may say, resembled a concertina, took me into the chemist's close by, where they were most kind, and gave me a restorative. With difficulty I got through my work that night, for my nerves were completely unstrung. On the following morning, after rehearsal, we walked down Northumberland Avenue to the Thames Embankment, and left orders for the coachman to follow us there. I had by no means recovered from the shock, and was still dwelling on our lucky escape, when my attention was drawn to an uncovered cart being dragged lazily along by a sleepy-looking horse, driven by a still more sleepy-looking man. Inside the cart sat six very old Chelsea pensioners, on six very old Windsor chairs, three on each side facing one another. They had evidently been sent for an outing, but to judge from the sad expression of their faces, and their weary eyes bent on the bottom of the cart, wondering, perhaps, what they had done to be so shaken about, neither looking to the left nor to the right, they appeared to be more or less indifferent to everything that was going on, looking the picture of resignation to the inevitable. A street arab, who at a glance keenly appreciated the situation, stood gazing at them with open mouth and a threatening twinkle in his eyes; and as this cart-load of melancholy humanity slowly went along, he said, in a whining voice, the tone of which fitted wonderfully to the appearance of these poor soldiers of a long past, "Oh, what a day you're 'aving!" Almost before our smiles had vanished, we saw the carriage approaching, when our countenances suddenly changed, as we asked ourselves, "Where on earth did the horse come from?" The coachman explained that, as our own horses were in hospital, "knowing how nervous I was, he had borrowed a quiet one." I am sure the animal came from some circus; his colour was a sort of rose-pink, he had pale, sleepy eyes, and a long cream-coloured tail —a horse that would sit down when he heard a German band, from force of habit; his pace was that of the trained steed long accustomed to carry a spangled lady on a decorated flat board like an afternoon tea-table. The carriage was an open one, and I implored to be allowed to get out and walk, for we were already attracting attention, and I feared the comic papers. The poor rose-pink steed was quite calm; no street noises disturbed him, and he was callous to such rude remarks as "Oh! I say, this is a horse wot leans agin'

the wall to think!" "'Ere, you with the long tail, a-robbin' the sweepers of their coppers. Why don't you tie it up, mum, with blue ribbon, or send him home to the Zoo?" The circus-like steed took no notice, and, I dare say, thought the boys were but clowns in the ring. Had he seen a hoop, I am sure he would have jumped through it! At last we reached home, and the poor thing was sent back to his native sawdust.'

After several attempts to alter the last act, and even to cut it out altogether, we decided, all our objections being met in the kindest spirit by the author, that Mr. Burnand's comedy was better suited to a smaller theatre than the Haymarket; and shortly after it became the talk of the town at the Prince of Wales's, where *The Colonel* was the means of re-establishing our old home in public favour.

Not finding a new play to suit us among the reams of manuscript we read, we resolved to revive *Masks and Faces*, which had proved so successful at the Prince of Wales's some five years or so before. An offer to alternate the parts of Triplet and Colley Cibber, as being likely to give some further interest to the performance, was agreed to by Arthur Cecil; so we began the new year by rehearsing the old play on its opening day, and, the cast being nearly a changed one, it was a long time in preparation.

There was terrible weather early in the year: 'Black Tuesday' (January 18, 1881) will be long remembered. On that afternoon we saw one pavement of Regent Street quite clear of snow, while on the opposite side the shops were closed, the drifts of snow being half-way up the shutters; the streets were deserts, and coachmen of all vehicles had a hard time of it. It was weeks before the mounds of snow piled in the squares and other open spots quite disappeared. Naturally all places of amusement suffered very much, and the theatres had their share of empty benches.

In a letter to a friend Mrs. Bancroft thus described the day: 'The cyclone of Tuesday last photographed itself upon my memory, and the negative is kept, so that I can reproduce it whenever it may be necessary. It seemed as if Siberia and all the Russias had sent their snow to London, to be added to and piled upon our own. The anxiety was "how shall we manage to struggle to the theatre at night?" But where there's a will there's a way, and although the former was pretty well frozen, and the latter was blocked up with snow, we turned up at the stage-door in appearance like Father (and Mother) Christmas. Every member of the company reached the theatre safely, several having to come long distances; it was funny to see the various effects the weather had on us: some faces were white, others red, others blue—*I* was all three! *The Vicarage* was the first piece, and when the curtain rose, discovering Mr. Cecil and myself as the Vicar and his wife playing chess, the auditorium presented the strangest picture, but all the same so ludicrous, that I could hardly resist laughing outright. There were

seven people in the stalls with topcoats, mufflers, fur cloaks, and large hoods—they must have fancied themselves in sleighs ; hardly anyone in the balcony, and the people in the rest of the theatre seemed swathed in shawls, leaving nothing but a row of noses to be seen. How they must have loved the drama to come at all ! I could not proceed for a moment, for I saw at once the comic aspect of the situation, and when my gaze met the expression on the faces of the stall-occupants I could not restrain my laughter any longer. I should have much liked to have invited them to tea in the green-room, and have had no performance at all ! It was like playing to a dead wall, not a sound of applause or laughter throughout the evening. They might have been figures from Madame Tussaud's ! When we started to walk or "thud" home, the expression on both our faces would have been a study for a painter. The snow was coming down fast, in flakes as big as notes waiting for an answer. We were soon as white as the snow, and looked for all the world like something "doomed for a certain time to walk the earth." When at last we arrived home, we found the coachman with a spade shovelling away the miniature mountains from the front of the house ; I suppose he thought we were a part of them, for he nearly shovelled us into the road too, before he discovered that we were his master and mistress.'

If this state of things was trying to the robust, what must it have been to the sick and ailing ?

Poor Sothern during all the winter had been wasting very fast. After our return from Malvern we could not fail to see the rapid strides disease had made ; and although to the last he looked forward to recovery, it was plainly not to be. He lived then in Vere Street, quite close to us, and we saw him as often as his sad state allowed, for we both were fond of him, and were glad to be among the last of his old friends to grasp his hand. The severe weather, without doubt, put out the flickering flame a little earlier than might have been. He died on the 20th, and a few fast friends went with his remains to Southampton, where, in accordance with his wish, all that is left of the once-courted Edward Askew Sothern lies.

How truly Pope says,

> 'What's fame ? A fancied life in others' breath,
> A thing beyond us, ev'n before our death.'

Let us once more recall his merry nature in happier days, and give an instance of Sothern's well-known love of practical joking. The keen enjoyment he derived, even when but a momentary success could crown his unstinted expenditure of either time or money, best proves this. The odd things he would constantly do are difficult to write about, but we will try to relate an instance of a joke, quite harmless in its results, of a kind he thoroughly enjoyed. After acting in Liverpool, he had a spare week before going on to Ireland, which he passed with a friend (as fond of fun as himself)

in North Wales, when the two put up at a well-known old inn near Bangor, greatly resorted to by famous anglers.

Sothern soon found out it was the custom for the oldest resident among the guests for the time being to preside at the little *table d'hôte*, over which they talked out their day's sport, and that it was the rule for the chairman always to say grace. The joker one evening learnt by accident, not long before the dinner-hour, that the visitor who had for some days presided had received a telegram which compelled a hurried packing up, and his departure. The spirit of mischief prompted Sothern to send a little note in the name of the landlord to all the other guests, some dozen or fifteen —of course privately and separately—couched in these words: 'Our esteemed president, I regret to say, will not be at dinner this evening. May I venture to request you to have the kindness to say grace in his absence? The signal for the same will be two sharp knocks upon the sideboard.' The signal, at the proper moment, was of course given by Sothern, who was more than repaid by the glee with which he often told how all the guests rose to a man, as at a word of command, each commencing to pronounce his favourite form of grace; and then, with all sorts of blundering apologies to each other, they resumed their seats.

Not until some time after he had passed away did the following extract from a series of theatrical opinions by Sothern, which appeared in America under the title of *Birds of a Feather*, come to our knowledge:

'Among the actresses, I should certainly place Mrs. Bancroft and Mrs. Kendal in the foremost rank, their specialities being high comedy. Mrs. Bancroft I consider the best actress on the English stage; in fact, I might say on any stage. She commenced her profession as a burlesque actress, and was one of the best we have ever seen in England. When she took the Prince of Wales's Theatre she discarded the burlesque business, and, to the amazement of everyone, proved herself the finest comedy actress in London. Her face, though not essentially pretty, is a mass of intelligence.'

To return to the rehearsals of *Masks and Faces*, which were conducted with all the care bestowed upon a new work. Elaborate dresses were made from the designs of the Hon. Lewis Wingfield; the scenery and accessories realized the beauties of the eighteenth century, as fully, perhaps, as any of our previous productions; and the revival commenced on Saturday, February 5th, 1881, with the following cast of the familiar characters: Sir Charles Pomander, Mr. H. B. Conway; Ernest Vane, Mr. Dacre; James Quin, Mr. Teesdale; Colley Cibber (on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Evenings), Mr. Arthur Cecil—(on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings), Mr. Bancroft; Triplet (on Tuesday, Thursday, and

Saturday evenings), Mr. Bancroft—(on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings), Mr. Arthur Cecil; Mr. Snarl, Mr. Kemble; Mr. Soaper, Mr. C. Brookfield; Lysimachus, Miss Kate Grattan; James Burdock, Mr. Stewart Dawson; Colander, Mr. E. Smedley; Hundsdon, Mr. Dean; Peg Woffington, Mrs. Bancroft; Mabel Vane, Miss Marion Terry; Kitty Clive, Miss Wade; Mrs. Triplet, Mrs. Canninge; Roxalana, Miss Mabel Grattan. The alternation of the part of Triplet was the subject of an admirable comic sketch by Charles Brookfield, depicting the two Triplets, the one lean and hungry, the other in better feather, as both dressed for the part by mistake on the same evening, and meeting on the staircase with these exclamations, 'Really, my dear Arthur!' 'Oh, my goodness, B.!' Dear Arthur, will you forgive us for thinking, whenever we look at this caricature, that you seem too highly nourished for poor half-starved Triplet? Collectors of correspondence on stage detail will find some interesting letters at this date in the *Daily News* on the subject of our exactitude, which are too voluminous to quote here. We were even able to settle the question of whether or not Roman numerals on the dial of a clock were correct, by speaking of the actual time-piece which Foote presented to the green-room of the old Haymarket Theatre more than a hundred years ago.

I (S. B. B.) bestowed great thought upon the part of Triplet, and if I may accept the warm praises of the most accomplished critics, I must believe the result was evident in an improved performance on my less-matured attempt in 1875. A more refined view of the character than had, so far as I could learn, been before taken of it, I justify by the delicate treatment Peg Woffington shows Triplet in her charity and help: were he not the broken wreck of a somewhat cultured person, I think the kind-hearted, busy actress would have relieved his wants in a blunter and simpler way.

The stir made by the performance far eclipsed our first production of the play, and, as with *School*, showed the value of our repertoire. The criticisms, in fact, were one loud chorus of praise. Charles Reade came to see the revival, and it is our impression that the occasion was his last visit to a theatre; he was, as we had always found him, generous in his praise, keen in his judgment, helpful in his criticism.

Before the play commenced, one night we learnt that Mr. Gladstone had stall-seats which were far removed from the stage, and when he found this was so, had asked if anything could be done to place him nearer, as his sense of hearing was becoming less keen. We found the only vacant seats in the house were in the Royal Box, which we begged to place at his disposal. In a day or two came this autograph letter of thanks in generous acknowledgment of so small a politeness:

'10, Downing Street, Whitehall, *April* 5, 1881.

'DEAR SIR,—Let me thank you very much for your courtesy in allowing me with my party to occupy a most advantageous post in

your theatre on Saturday night. By so doing you secured to me the fulness of a great treat, which otherwise declining powers of sight and hearing would somewhat have impaired.

'For the capital acting of the chief parts I was prepared; but the whole cast, likewise, seemed to me excellent.—I remain, dear sir, your very faithful and obliged, W. E. GLADSTONE.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

The life of that great statesman, Lord Beaconsfield, Gladstone's strongest rival, was at this time hanging by a thread, and added deeply to our regret at never having known him; but a few weeks before his fatal illness we missed one night, and only by three minutes, the honour of presentation to him. The date of his death, April 19th, it still well remembered. These two great rivals of our day, Disraeli and Gladstone, we have heard both cheered and hooted in their turn by the mob.

Shakespeare, in truth, was 'not for an age, but for all time.' How his words apply to any sometime idol of the crowd! 'There have been many great men that have flattered the people, who never loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore; so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better ground.'

It was in the spring of this year that a rather amusing incident occurred, which may be worth the telling here. When it happened, we were careful to keep it from publicity.

Like most theatrical people, we were tormented by callers at all hours of the day, and long had been obliged to teach our servants to deny us to the band of applicants who looked like stage aspirants or members of the fraternity of the 'great unacted.' One morning, quite early, when the manservant who knew our ways, and had learnt at certain hours to deny us to all comers, had been sent on a message in the neighbourhood, the bell was answered by a foolish housemaid who had no right to attend to its summons. The girl admitted two ladies, showed them into a room downstairs, and then announced that 'Mrs. Louison wished to see us.' We were very busy at the time, and very angry at the interruption to our work. Knowing no person named Louison, a polite message was sent to the ladies to the effect that 'Mrs. Bancroft regretted she was unable to see them so early without an appointment.' We afterwards heard that when this message was delivered, both the ladies repeated Mrs. Bancroft's name in some surprise, and, after talking together, went away on foot. In the evening a letter was received from Lady Sophia Macnamara, explaining that she was one of the callers in the morning, and had mistaken 31, Cavendish Square, for No. 37, the house of the distinguished dental surgeon, Mr. (now Sir) John Tomes, with whom an appointment had been made for the Princess Louise, on whom she was in waiting, and who was our other visitor, the foolish servant having blundered

over the name announced by Lady Sophia. An answer explained the facts of the case from our side, and shortly afterwards, being invited by Sir Edward and Lady Inglefield to the honour of meeting her Royal Highness, to whom Mrs. Bancroft was presented, the Princess laughingly inquired of her 'if she remembered Mrs. Louison?'

There is but little else to tell of this part of the season, as *Masks and Faces* uninterruptedly pursued its career of great attractiveness, which far eclipsed its earlier success at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; but we linger for a moment on the artistic recollection of some very interesting performances of *Othello* given at the Lyceum in which Edwin Booth and Henry Irving, in friendly rivalry, alternated the parts of Iago and the Moor; while Drury Lane was visited by the distinguished Meiningen Company of German actors, whom we also saw. We remember most their splendid grouping and management of crowds in *Julius Cæsar*, only Ludwig Barnay's acting as Mark Antony striking us as being of the higher order. We had the pleasure to meet the leading members of the troupe, at a reception given to them shortly afterwards, in the studio of Mr. Boehm, the eminent sculptor, when their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales honoured the gathering with their presence.

This second run of *Masks and Faces* lasted well beyond a hundred nights, and to close the season, a few final representations of *Society* and renewed performances of *Good for Nothing* formed the attraction. This change of programme commenced on June 11th. We announced that the old comedy, which more than fifteen years before had laid the foundation of our success and had not been revived since 1874, would now be acted for the last times under our management, and for a brief period only, the principal parts being taken as follows: Lord Ptarmigant, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Sidney Daryl, Mr. H. B. Conway; Tom Stylus, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. John Chodd, sen., Mr. Kemble; Mr. John Chodd, jun., Mr. C. Brookfield; Lady Ptarmigant, Mrs. Canninge; and Maud Hetherington, Miss Cavalier.

A very elaborate scene of the London Square was painted by Mr. Hann, and we were glad to find the old comedy stood the lapse of time, and transplanting to the larger stage, far better than was expected. This final performance by us of *Society*—for at the end of it we gave up the rights to the author's children—was full of memories to us both, it having been the lucky stepping-stone to all that followed in our career.

Buckstone's effective comic drama, which so delightfully makes poor Nan a charming heroine, materially strengthened the bill, and was played as in the old Prince of Wales's days two years before.

Apropos of this performance came the following letter from the accomplished German actor of whom we have just spoken:

'8, Craven Street, *June* 18, 1881.

'HIGHLY HONOURED SIR,—Allow me to tell you how much I was charmed with yesterday's representation both of *Society* and *Good for Nothing*. I confess I wondered at and admired likewise the perfection of the particular artistic performances, as well as the entire production and the excellent *ensemble*. Receive my hearty thanks for giving me the opportunity of seeing this representation, which will form a striking point in my London recollections.—In great esteem, yours, LUDWIG BARNAY.

'To S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

We had, some time before, bought the English rights of a bright little one-act comedy, played by Chaumont as *Lolotte*; and a version, suggested by the story, was very cleverly written for us by Mr. Burnand, under the title of *A Lesson*. This, we resolved, should commence the following season in November, in conjunction with a revival (*faute de mieux*) of Tom Taylor's drama, *Plot and Passion*. These plays were partly got ready before we closed, and, having again let our theatre for an autumn season, we had the curious experience of renewing old memories by once or twice rehearsing on the familiar stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, which was kindly offered to us by our tenant, Mr. Bruce, who was still prospering with *The Colonel*.

We may here say that the Prince of Wales's Theatre was subsequently condemned by the authorities, and, after being for some time untenanted, was eventually occupied by the Salvation Army. If ever we are at all near, it is difficult to resist looking at our former home, for a walk in front of it and round about the old stage-door is fertile in remembrances; even to the same butcher in an adjoining street, who still solicits custom from the passers-by in terms which had often amused us: 'Now then, gather round, ladies—gather round; the finest beef in London: hask the hanimal!' Outside the deserted little theatre we lately read an announcement of an approaching 'send off' to be given to a member of the 'corps,' who was about to visit America. At the foot of the placard were these extraordinary words: 'At 9.30—Ham! Jam! and Hallelujah!'

After an association, as pleasant privately as it was professionally, of many years' duration, at the close of this season, we lost the valuable services of our musical conductor, Mr. Meredith Ball, who obtained an engagement at the Lyceum Theatre, where the season was more extended and without the long vacations we felt we had earned. Mr. Ball, it need not be said, has proved his value to Mr. Irving in many magnificent productions—notably in *Faust*.

A PRACTICAL JOKE BY MR. BANCROFT.

I recall some rare fun we had with Meredith Ball, through my reviving a practical joke, almost as old no doubt as the historical 'Berners Street hoax.' I had a large number of visiting-cards engraved, bearing the name of 'Mr. J. J. Withers,' and for months afterwards, wherever Mere-

dith Ball went, one of these cards would follow him, being left by confederates at his house, or at the theatre by myself, when it was known the caller would not find him. After awhile, the mystery was increased by such pencilled messages as, 'So sorry to miss you; saw our old Liverpool friends yesterday'—'Unlucky again; will call to-morrow at twelve.' Ball, terribly agitated and puzzled, would confide to us at night that this invisible visitor went between him and his rest, for he prided himself on a good memory, and asserted that he had never known anyone named Withers in his life. All appointments made, of course, were broken, to be followed by another card with an apology, left by me with our hall-keeper, who played conspirator, and who, in answer to searching inquiries as to Withers's personal appearance, gave a vague description, which still hid my identity. Letters soon followed the cards, regretting the writer's ill-luck at not finding 'his old friend;' great indignation on Ball's part at the expression, which culminated in an agony of despair as to who his tormentor could really be, when Withers said in a postscript, 'So you, too, are married, old fellow!' Telegrams followed letters, with the same fun and result; and, after making an appointment at the Crystal Palace, we followed it up by a telegram from Euston, of course signed Withers, expressing his regret at being hurriedly summoned to Liverpool. The next step, in a day or two's time, was a letter, bearing the Liverpool postmark, from 'Mrs. Withers!' explaining that her husband had hurriedly sailed on a business matter for New York, and begged her to express his deep regret at not having yet renewed his old friendship. Ball's agitation at the whole affair, I am afraid, caused us immense amusement. After a long lapse of time—a year, I think—'J. J. Withers' returned from the States, and again left his card at the theatre and also at Ball's house; the excitement of the unfortunate recipient was once more worked up to fever-heat, and the same sort of fun was again carried on successfully, although broken by a holiday, before Ball, maddened by all sorts of adventures and delays on the part of the ghostly 'J. J. Withers,' succeeded in meeting 'his old friend;' his unsuspicious nature never once being awakened by misgivings. During this holiday, Ball stayed with friends in Leicestershire, to whom he told the story and all its torments. Months afterwards, when he was leading his band in the orchestra of the little Prince of Wales's Theatre one evening, a man came hurriedly to the door, when this conversation took place:

MESSENGER: 'Mr. Ball, there's a gentleman at the stage-door who wants to see you, sir.'

BALL (fully occupied with a delightful operatic selection): 'Go away, I can't speak to you now.'

MESSENGER: 'Very sorry, sir; but the gent says it's most important, and he must see you.'

BALL (taking up his violin, of which he was a master in Costa's

band): 'Must see me. Go back and ask the gentleman's name.'

Ball for a few minutes afterwards was lost in the execution of a dreamy solo which, being out of sight of the audience, he would sometimes play himself, when the man returned and again put his head in at the door.

MESSENGER: 'Beg pardon, Mr. Ball.'

BALL: 'Well?'

MESSENGER: 'The gent says his name is Mr. J. J. Withers, sir.'

BALL (almost dropping his fiddle): 'What!'

MESSENGER: 'Mr. J. J. Withers, sir.'

BALL (still fiddling violently): 'Withers!—at last. Don't let him go. I'll be upstairs in a minute. Shut the door—lock him in—anything—but don't let him escape!'

MESSENGER: 'All right, sir.' (Going away.) 'What's up? Who's this Withers, I wonder?'

Ball hurried the time, brought the selection to an end—threw down his violin—rushed upstairs, and arrived, panting, in the hall, to be received with roars of laughter by—his friend from Leicestershire, who had not forgotten Ball's story of the previous summer, and announced himself for a joke as the shadowy 'J. J. Withers.'

A long, long time afterwards I came across a packet of cards which still bore the name of 'J. J. Withers.' I thought of all the old fun, and that it was unlikely we could again revive it, so I sealed up the cards in a large envelope and addressed them to the theatre, with my compliments, to Meredith Ball. In the evening, our old friend told me with quite a sorrowful voice, and a really saddened look, that *I had shattered the romance of his life!* I hope he has long since forgiven my ruthless act.

The season came to an end with the month of July, and again we were faithful to Pontresina. Again, too, we were fortunate in travelling companions, meeting, on their way to the same destination, Lord Bennet and Arthur Cecil, with whom we recall a pleasant evening in the little inn at Mühlen, where the former, to the latter's accompaniment, by his charming singing of 'Santa Lucia,' stirred such powerful emotions in the breast of the landlord's pretty daughter—which we framed of course as a love-story—that she burst into tears and ran out of the room.

We had a warm welcome from our old hosts, who received us with smiles and bouquets, at the Hôtel Roseg, and a restful stay there. Of the Engadine there is nothing new to tell; the usual visitation from wandering minstrels, Tyrolean vocalists, and travelling conjurers being this year supplemented by an excellent Hungarian band, which performed alternately at the chief hotels at St. Moritz and Pontresina.

These entertainments were added to by still another given for

the charities by ourselves and friends. Our efforts grew more and more ambitious and dramatic, trying the utmost resources of the Engadine to illustrate, for we not only repeated our performance of *The Vicarage*, but followed it by the amusing scene between Lady Franklin and Mr. Graves from Lord Lytton's comedy *Money*, and also acted *Good for Nothing*.

This entertainment largely increased both funds for which we worked, and the result well repaid the labour of all concerned, which was really considerable. In *The Vicarage* we this year had the experienced aid of an excellent amateur in Mr. Dundas Gardiner on the stage, while another, Mr. Byrom, helped us very much 'behind the scenes,' clearing and rearranging the stage, in fact, in sight of the audience, for there was no curtain. We also found highly intelligent recruits in an ardent lover of the Engadine, Mr. Arthur Swan, and a young soldier son of Madame Lind Goldschmidt, both of whom aided Arthur Cecil and ourselves very much in making up the cast of the farce, which was admirably played throughout.

When we left Pontresina this year we went down to Italy by the Maloja Pass; breaking the great descent from the high air for one night at a new hotel, and kind of half-way house, built evidently for the purpose, at Promontogno. In the morning we drove past the frontier at Castasegna, where the *douane* is, and on to Colico; there we caught the boat for Cadenabbia, and in its olive groves we dreamed away another fragment of repose.

In the words of Longfellow, who wrote them of this enchanting spot:

> 'I ask myself, Is this a dream?
> Will it all vanish into air?
> Is there a land of such supreme
> And perfect beauty anywhere?'

Seated one night by the little quay in front of the Hôtel Belle Vue, when the lake was bathed in moonlight, which wrought to the full its romantic influence, we were told a little story of its fascination in something like these words:

'It is five-and-twenty years since I first visited the Lake of Como, and I come to it again and again whenever I can do so. The first time I was here I fell into conversation with a stranger who was then what I am now, a middle-aged Englishman, whom I had met on one of the boats. He told me that it was then twenty-five years since he had known the lake—when he was a youngster enjoying a holiday before joining his regiment, to which he had just been gazetted, in India. He fell ill with fever during his first year of service, and was sent home on sick leave. He disembarked at some port in the Mediterranean, resolved to take the Lake of Como for a brief visit on his way to his own country. Bewitched by its beauties more and more, he lingered on, till at last he felt how little of his leave would remain for home and friends. England, he

added, he found so cold and sunless, while his beloved lake acted so powerfully as a magnet as to draw him back to pass there the brief remnant of his leave. I came,' said the soldier, 'as fast as I could get here, being miserly over every hour I had left to me for indulgence in its fascination. One day, quite soon, I met an Italian girl with whom I fell desperately in love. In a few words I'll tell you my life and history since I proposed to her—I was accepted; I resigned my commission; I married; I bought a villa on the shores of Como; I've lived there ever since; and here,' pointing to a handsome lad of some twenty years, 'comes my son. Let me present him.'

ON THE SEA AND IN THE EAST, BY S. B. B.

Our holiday was far from ended. As I had arranged to go for a trip to Constantinople, chiefly for the sake of a sea-voyage in the delightful companionship of J. C. Parkinson, Mrs. Bancroft deciding meanwhile to renew her acquaintance with Malvern, my pen must, unaided, travel to the end of this chapter, to describe 'fresh fields and pastures new.' Some items of our experiences, I hope, will not be without interest.

We took passage for Malta in the P. and O. steamship *Deccan*, and by the great kindness of our friend Mr. Sutherland (now M.P. for Greenock), the chairman of the company, were allowed the privilege of two of her officers' cabins on deck. Before we sailed, Mrs. Bancroft went with me one day to go over the ship and lunch with the captain and officers. The visit, I regret to say, seemed only to confirm her terror of the sea, 'and all that therein is.' She preferred the bracing air and hills of Malvern to the possibilities of the Channel, and more especially the Bay of Biscay.

On September 28th, we sailed from Southampton. The pilot, when he left us, bore a little bundle of parting telegrams, and then came the peace given only by the sea. My friend Parkinson lived in the chief officer's cabin, while I occupied the doctor's sanctum. Although the space and privacy this concession gave were highly valued, truth compels me to tell the luxury was not an unmixed blessing, for just outside my door there was a kind of poultry-yard, the feathered occupants of which never failed to remind me of their existence in the early hours, while, periodically, their short span of life was noisily shortened for table purposes. Very close, and also within view, was the slaughter-house and home of the ship's butcher! So the intending traveller by sea will learn there are many considerations in the choice of a deck-cabin. The greatest question of all, however—the weather—was solved quite in our favour. The dreaded Bay was almost pond like, and the knot of fellow-passengers whom we chummed with—chiefly soldiers and civil servants returning from 'leave' to India—cordial and friendly; the picturesque surroundings of ayahs, seedie boys, coolies, negroes, lascars, and Chinamen being new to me, although familiar enough

to so tried an Eastern traveller as my companion, and often described by his graphic pen. There was also a handsome but wicked-looking syce (I think that is the correct name for a groom in India) on board, who was in charge of two blood-horses which he was taking out to his master, the Rajah of somewhere. The man, I remember, wore rings on some of his toes, and silver ornaments screwed through his nostrils. This trip was of wonderful service in furnishing me with all kinds of detail for a proposed revival we contemplated, in time of need, of the old Haymarket comedy, the *Overland Route*, and I did not fail to observe all that passed around me, taking copious notes, and making rough drawings of much that was enacted in the way of life on ship-board.

We reached Gibraltar at noon on the Sunday after we sailed, and, having to remain some hours in harbour for coaling purposes, after going through the *pratique* ceremony, we spent the time on shore. The heat was intense, and the parched air in strong contrast to the breezes that followed our floating home. After a halt at the telegraph-office to let our belongings know that all was well, and a visit to the English Club, where we devoured, as travellers only can, a file of the *Times*, we inspected all that we could see, in the hours at our disposal, of England's wonderful possession, which breathes 'Rule Britannia' at every turn one takes, and still had time to drive to the Spanish lines, and through a neighbouring village before rejoining our ship. When we reached her deck I learnt another lesson—my cabin was on the coaling side, and I had not shut the window!

In lovely weather still, which grew appreciably hotter day by day, we sailed for Malta.

Soon the piano was hoisted from the saloon to the upper-deck, where ladies played or sang, and where small impromptu dances were indulged in by those inclined that way. The days went quickly by, and we were very close to Malta before I felt the smallest wish to resign a meal. My last breakfast on board the *Deccan* proved, I confess, a trouble to me, and I was reminded that *la mer*, with the privilege of her sex, gave indications of a change of temper. Nothing serious, however, happened before we said good-bye to our friends on board, and were rowed ashore as the majestic troopship *Jumna* moved slowly from the harbour on her road to India.

The value of Malta to us is, perhaps, hardly appreciated by those who have never seen the island or the Mediterranean. I know that the sight of it very much impressed my mind. Our visit was most interesting, although limited to two days and a night, for into that brief time we crowded much experience. Being made free of the English Club, we had another chance of knowing something of the world's doings. Of course we bought lace and silver things in the Strada Reale, and saw the Church of the Knights of St. John; but our most interesting excursion was to a monastery, of which I

forget the name, although I remember well being shown the vaults where dead monks, like mummies, were propped up in niches, and the calm smile of the brother who escorted us when he pointed to a vacant space which he explained was waiting so for him. He was an old man then, so perhaps his time may have already come to be placed there.

Our pleasant stay at Malta was cut short by hurried news that the Cunard ship *Cherbourg*, in which we had booked a cabin for Constantinople, would sail earlier than was expected; so we packed in haste and got on board at nightfall with little time to spare.

The weather had distinctly changed, and for the worse. A vile wind, called the sirocco, made things wretched for the time, especially to those who, like myself, can only be called fine-weather sailors.

All the next day I was in my berth, my frame of mind being only known by sufferers from sea-sickness. In a spirit far removed from any thought of boasting, but of perfect thankfulness, it may be of some interest to state that this day and another day in 1858, and also from the same cause when I crossed the Atlantic, are the only days since my early boyhood that I have passed in bed. Many a time I dare say I should have been wiser to have stayed there, but I have always struggled against small illnesses, having often acted when in pain, and often, too, in sorrow.

On the following morning my friend Parkinson conquered my demoralized state, and helped me, in a condition of eccentric dishabille, to reach the deck; there I remained throughout the day, and soon was well again. Our life was very changed from the routine of the *Deccan*—all was now on a much smaller scale, and by no means so amusing; there was but a mere handful of passengers, while we carried heavy cargo, which we learnt would necessitate delays at Syra and Smyrna before we reached Constantinople. Our chief amusement was listening to marvellous yarns spun by one of the officers, who owed to his Munchausen-like proclivities the name we always knew him by—'The Baron.' The *Cherbourg* was one of the smaller vessels of the Cunard fleet, and, by comparison with the big P. and O. steamer we had quitted, and the frequency with which we had the chief deck all to ourselves, we might have been on a large steam yacht. In beautiful weather we passed through a sort of network, to judge by the charts, of Grecian islands, and anchored at daybreak one morning in the bay off Syra. Parkinson and I at once were rowed ashore to see the picturesque little city, which ranks second in importance, I believe, in the Greek kingdom. We caught sight of a small boy who, as he walked down the chief street, affixed here and there upon the walls a brief announcement printed on note-paper with a mourning edge. Upon inspection, we gathered that it referred to a funeral to take place that day. Later on two Greek ladies,

fellow-passengers, also came ashore, and we found the ceremony was about to be held in the cathedral, so we resolved to go there and see the rites ; on our way a little crowd attracted our attention, and we found ourselves outside the home of the deceased—an old lady who had only died that morning. Soon her body was carried forth by sailors upon an open bier, and, as it passed, some people came out upon the house-tops, and cast vessels of water on the ground between the corpse and those who followed it to the grave. This was explained to us as an old Eastern superstition, its purport being to keep death away from the survivors ; we were also told that the dress in which the poor, coffinless body was clothed was most likely the result of the savings of a lifetime. We followed, full of reflections, to the handsome church, where many priests, clad in the gorgeous garments of the Greek ritual, surrounded by the mourners and the bearers of handsome censers, received the dead with chants, and fulfilled the last obsequies ; one of the dignitaries seemed throughout the ceremony to keep an eye upon us, but I have every hope that our behaviour was quite decorous while, like all present, we stood round the bier, and carried in our hands long lighted candles. When all was over our thoughts were brought back to a strong sense of this world's smallness by the unseemly haste displayed in extinguishing the said candles ; for, with marvellous dexterity, two creatures had blown the whole large number out almost before the body had been carried from the building.

There was still more cargo to discharge, or else some to take on board, when the night fell, so we remained at anchor in the harbour, our vexation at the delay being little assuaged by the sight of burning mills, which caught fire soon afterwards. These mills were built upon some heights, and the flames with much grandeur lighted up the city and the shipping which reposed in its little bay.

Soon we were at Smyrna, and, again delayed by cargo, we went on shore : certainly we had seen nothing so Eastern as the sight the quays presented. We found types of every race and nation in all the picturesqueness taught by some remembrance of the 'Arabian Nights.' Caravans on their way with their troops of camels, merchants and pilgrims, and many countenances whose owners looked like murderers or thieves. We made straight for our Consul, and were much indebted to his kindness ; he was a cheery, good-looking old gentleman, and warned us strongly not to go to Ephesus, as its neighbourhood was at the time infested by bandits. Had I disobeyed the kind advice, what a chance might have been given for sensation paragraphs, headed in the London newspapers 'An Actor's Ransom'! Our friend urged us by all means to quit the quays well before nightfall ; and so that we might see the bazaars in safety, he sent us through them under the care of his own *cavass*, a handsome petticoated Greek, who

recalled Byron's corsair to my mind, with his sash and girdle one mass of pistols, swords, and daggers, somewhat interfered with by a prosaic umbrella. Under this escort we went fearlessly where otherwise we never should have ventured to intrude. We also followed the wise counsel of our new-found friend, and slept on board.

Irritated in the morning at seeing the mass of cargo still to be stowed away, and a little tired of the stories of the modern Munchausen, we resolved to tranship to a Russian steamer sailing that afternoon for Constantinople, and to quit the *Cherbourg*. All this, with a little strategy, was briefly done. We soon found ourselves on board the *Nahimoff*, and the proud possessors of a state cabin containing two iron bedsteads—luxuries till then unknown to us at sea.

After an excellent dinner, and tasting tea really *à la Russe*, we went on the lower deck, and, in the moonlight, made the tour of its picturesque-looking native occupants; for your Easterns spend but little on transit—most of the travellers, in fact, carried their own bedding, or were contented with the hospitality of a prayer-carpet.

We saw wonderful groups of humanity huddled patiently together, sometimes in the open, sometimes under improvised tents; and before turning in to our more refined quarters, had a pleasant talk with the captain, who proved to be an Irishman by birth, though naturalized as a Russian, who owned the British name of Thomas.

Our sojourn on this ship, if all went well, was only to extend to forty hours; and cheerfully enough they passed away, there being much to watch, when we were up and about next day, in the movements of our humbler travelling-companions, whose lives on deck were so *en évidence*. Among them, to our amazement, we found an officer of some rank in the Turkish army, who travelled with his own bed, and packed it up himself; while all the way from Smyrna to Constantinople he removed no clothing but his boots, and lived entirely, throughout both days, on scraps of cheese and olives. The well-known reputation of the Turks as soldiers, if well led, is doubtless a little due to the small amount of food they want, even in hardship. 'Tommy Atkins,' I fancy, must have his commissariat better supplied. So far as we could see and judge, no single soul on board, except the few who travelled at first-class fares and ate and drank in the saloon, spent a single coin. One and all seemed to carry with them, in a sort of gipsy fashion, everything they wanted, and showed no sign of irritation or fatigue. When morning came they calmly stowed away their bedding; and when evening fell, before remaking it, they sedately spread their prayer-carpets and went through their orisons, unmindful of the gaze of the benighted. My thought as I again went to bed was what on earth would happen to them all if a storm came on! Would such a visitation, I wonder, have ruffled their seeming stoicism?

After a short agony as to the load of humanity on board interfering with a clean bill of health, and bitter thoughts of possible quarantine, we steamed down the Bosphorus at an early hour. The morning mists fortunately dispersed in time to show us the wonderful view as we approached Constantinople—a view described so often and so ably that I shall not attempt to paint the picture of its mosques and minarets, its towers and temples, glittering in the Eastern sun.

When we landed, disenchantment came. Our quarters were at Missiri's during our short visit, and we carried away no particular remembrance of its comfort. A guide, who proved an amusing rascal with a strong belief in the powers of 'backsheesh,' was engaged, and a few days were devoted to hard sight-seeing. We ascended the Galata Tower, from which the sight well repays the toil; we 'did' Santa Sophia and other mosques until we were tired of taking off our boots, and shambling in ill-fitting slippers on the marble floors; we saw and marvelled at both the dancing and the howling dervishes; we rowed in a *caïque* on the Golden Horn; we bought bad cigarettes in the Grande Rue of Pera (which, to my thinking, is very like a street in a third-rate Italian town, with nothing but the fez to bespeak the East); we thought the bazaars of Stamboul very inferior to those we had visited at Smyrna; we went to a music-hall with the British Consul, who was most kind to us, and found the stage occupied by English artists well known at the Oxford or the Alhambra; we enjoyed the hospitality of the English Club, where we saw our friend the Turkish officer as a guest, looking furtively at our table, we thought, and guessing how much we remembered of the cheese and olives; we saw the crowds of scarred street-dogs, and heard their howls too often in the night; we were jolted to death in the vilest vehicles over the worst-paved roads I have ever seen or read of; in a word, we rushed about from place to place and saw much that lies between Stamboul and Therapia, including a sweet and peaceful reminder of home in the green and well-kept cemetery, with its English custodian, on the heights of Scutari, where lie the graves of many of our Crimean heroes.

Invitations to dinner, and one to a soirée and some amateur theatricals given at the summer residence of the British Embassy at Therapia, reached me, which were all the pleasanter as I bore no letters of introduction. I could not accept them, for it was 'the sea, the sea, the open sea,' I wanted, and, my time being limited, I took passage for Marseilles in one of the Messagerie Impériale line of steamers. The voyage, alas, had to be made alone, for Parkinson was not, like me, tied to dates, and had resolved to ramble on. My old friend saw me off, and, as he was rowed back to the shore, I felt very like the returning schoolboy of my youth, who waves his adieux with ghastly smiles, which vainly try to mask his deep emotions, as those dear to him fade further from his view.

This six days' voyage in the *Provence* was strong in contrast to the time I had passed on board the *Deccan*. Of the two services I preferred the English line, although many frequent travellers in the Mediterranean think otherwise. I was unfortunate with regard to our stopping-places, as we were anchored off the Piræus in the middle of the night (I remember being at once woke up by the silence of the engines), and reached the Bay of Naples at an hour too late to go ashore ; although even then our deck swarmed with vendors of goods in mock coral and doubtful tortoise-shell, than which a few stale English newspapers were much more in request, The number of my fellow-passengers was limited ; they included, however, two Englishmen, a Q.C. and a doctor, with whom I chummed, which partly passed the time, the rest being given up to studying the part of Fouché for our coming performance of *Plot and Passion*. The weather throughout was good, and the shores of the Riviera looked very beautiful as we neared our destination. I could hardly believe, as I thought over all I had seen, that I had been but four short weeks away from England.

After the delights of the *douane* at Marseilles, there was yet time for a drive through the town before starting for Paris by the night express. Although it was now the end of October the trees in the chief streets were still thickly clad with autumn leaves, and French gaiety reigned in the pretty shops and on the handsome boulevards. As we travelled northwards, a few hours later, we grew rapidly conscious of great change in the temperature. At Lyons one positively shivered, and the arrival in Paris at daybreak on a wintry morning was in strong contrast to the Mediterranean heat of the day before.

Paris playbills at this time included *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, with its almost ideal original cast, at the Français, and *Divorçons*, with the humorous acting of Chaumont and Daubray, at the Palais Royal. I also learnt much about Sardou's coming play at the Vaudeville before my return home, after an absence of thirty-three days, to take up the rehearsals of *Plot and Passion*. During these final preparations came the *première* of *Odette*, for which I crossed the Channel again on a night I shall not readily forget ; the weather at Dover Town Station was described, in answer to the anxious question of a fellow-traveller in the same compartment, as 'very dirty.' I guessed what this might mean, for it was raining in torrents and blowing hard ; as I reached the gangway the deck of the steamer seemed to be looking at me ; one moment's hesitation between a bed at the Lord Warden or continuing my journey ended in the latter choice. There was no private cabin to be had for love or money ; the brief delay in learning this was long enough to fill the saloon below, where, however, I found one vacant sofa, and still can hear the groans of a fat Frenchman, who was my nearest neighbour. We all passed an odious time, and I was not sorry to be at last safely landed at the Mirabeau.

Sardou's play proved greatly successful, the opening and closing acts especially so; the first act, indeed, is a play complete in itself, and one of the most powerful the great dramatist ever wrote. At its close I remember the chorus of voices in the *couloirs*—'La pièce est finie! Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire?' In spite of this, and many apparent difficulties in adapting it to the English stage, I bought the right to do our best with it. That fine actor, Adolphe Dupuis, although a little old for his character, and Blanche Pierson, carried off the honours, Maria Legault being charming as the *ingénue*.

The old proverb was once more true—the storm was followed by a calm, and when I recrossed the *Manche*, it was as hushed and silent as a lake.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SEASON OF 1881-82.

Plot and Passion—*A Lesson*—Letter from F. C. Burnand—Mrs. Langtry's *début*—Engagement of Madame Modjeska for *Odette*—Mrs. Langtry's resolve to become a professional actress—Her appearance in *Ours*—Dinner at Marlborough House to leading London actors—Death of the Dowager Countess of Essex ('Kitty Stephens')—Sardou's new play—An incident at the Théâtre du Vaudeville—*Odette*—Modjeska's acting—Foundation of the Actors' Benevolent Fund—Characteristic letter from Dion Boucicault—Death of Benjamin Webster—His services to the stage—Letter from Henry Irving—Engagement of Mrs. John Wood and David James—Arthur Cecil leaves the company—Parting letters—End of a brilliant season—Again in Switzerland—The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol—Church and stage—Charles Wyndham's correspondence—A joke at Cadenabbia—A 'Funeral Note.'

With regard to the elements, we have often been unlucky on our opening nights, and this year were more so than usual, for the 26th of November was most tempestuous; throughout the evening the sound of the storm penetrated to the theatre; the large ventilator over the sunlight, and smaller ones above the gallery ceiling, groaned and rattled as the hurricane of wind whirled them round and round, shaking their safety. When the audience assembled it could not have been in a cheerful frame of mind. Whether the drama, or the actors, or the spectators were one or the other, or all three, a little dull, does not much matter now, but as truthful chroniclers, we must not claim *Plot and Passion* to rank with our best successes.

The novelty which followed fortunately made amends, and was most warmly received. Mr. Burnand was unable to be present on the first night of his clever little play, but wrote a letter on the following day, which will confirm our impressions of the elements,

and which we hope he will forgive us for printing as a sequel to an extract from the play-bill.

This was our cast of *Plot and Passion*, for which, it should be mentioned, very effective costumes were designed by the Hon. Lewis Wingfield: Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto, Mr. Bancroft; Marquis de Cevennes, Mr. Pinero; Berthier, the Grand Chamberlain, Mr. Teesdale; Henri de Neuville, Mr. H. B. Conway; Maximilian Desmarets, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Grisboulle, Mr. Stewart Dawson; Jabot, Mr. Dean; Marie de Fontanges, Miss Ada Cavendish; Cecile, Miss Augusta Wilton. After the drama was played for the first time *A Lesson*, a new comedy in one act (founded on *Lolotte*), written by Mr. F. C. Burnand: Sir Thomas Duncan, Mr. C. Brookfield; Mr. Wentworth, Mr. H. B. Conway; Lady Duncan, Miss Blanche Henri; Markham, Miss Warden; Miss Kate Reeve (*of the Theatres Royal*), Mrs. Bancroft.

'18, Royal Crescent, Ramsgate, *November* 27, 1881.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Excuse the style of this letter, for after such a fearful night *here*, not at the Haymarket, I write with (a pen—yes) *several tiles off!!* I sincerely congratulate you upon what appears from the *Observer* to have been a Big Success with a very Small Piece. We came down here to rest and be thankful. We did not rest, and we are not thankful. Such a gale! The centre part of the crescent veranda at the back blown right down, and the doors blockaded; chimneys nowhere; wrecks—alas! everywhere. Tugs and lifeboats in full employ. "A night for crossing!" Well, to some it was a night for crossing themselves and saying their prayers, for we thought that Mother Shipton's prophecies had come true, and there was an end of everything, as there is to this letter. Wife and self immensely pleased. We thought of you at 10 and 10·30 last night, and wondered.—Yours very truly, F. C. BURNAND.'

A few days afterwards, and while our minds were agitated as to the enduring capacity of *Plot and Passion*—that long-looked-for treasure, a good original play, not having fallen into our hands, and there being some months to face before the version of Sardou's *Odette* could possibly be ready for production—we received a visit from Mrs. Labouchere, who confirmed some rumours, which had already appeared in print, apropos of a performance for a charity in which she had taken part at Twickenham, announcing Mrs. Langtry's determination to go upon the stage, and, if her *début* warranted her hopes, to follow the calling of an actress. Mrs. Labouchere asked if we would allow this experiment to be made at the Haymarket Theatre in an afternoon performance, to be given in aid of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, when Mrs. Langtry proposed to appear as Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*, in which part Mrs. Labouchere was already engaged in coaching

her. We took a day to reflect and weigh the many *pros* and *cons* the startling proposition involved. We knew that our refusal would be followed by immediate acquiescence at another theatre, while we also felt that the extraordinary career of popularity which had been Mrs. Langtry's lot for several London seasons must have destroyed all fear of complete failure, for the ordeal of 'facing the public' had already been often and gracefully passed through, and rendered composure almost a certainty, so our decision was to announce the performance to take place on the 15th of December: the prices of admission being arranged so as to serve the Charity in a material way. Never, perhaps, was a theatre more besieged for seats. All sections of society fought for places, and loud were the lamentations in many a high quarter where non-success had followed every effort to procure them.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Langtry, with quiet confidence, pursued her rehearsals, and public excitement to be present at this exceptional *début* reached fever heat. Even the late Abraham Hayward, acquaintance with whose wit and anecdote we had first made at the table of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, shared it so far as to write a criticism on the event for the *Times*.

Before an audience which included the Prince and Princess of Wales, and representatives of great distinction in fashion, art, and literature, the performance took place. We occupied the novel position of witnessing it from the stalls of our own theatre. Mrs. Langtry was very quietly received upon her first entrance, but the audience gradually thawed towards her, and it was generally agreed that the effort was one of marked ability and promise. With regard to its substantial result to the Theatrical Fund—the bribes and efforts to obtain seats at any cost being throughout disregarded, and the advertised prices strictly adhered to—we had the pleasure of handing the secretary £430.

Frequent conversations with Mrs. Langtry convinced us of her earnest intention to play with all seriousness and desperation for an important stake, and we agreed upon the terms of an engagement until April, which month we had fixed for our production of *Odette*, having in the meantime been so fortunate as to induce Madame Modjeska, who was passing through London on her way to act in Poland, to accept the part of the heroine, and to return for the rehearsals of the play as soon as she was free.

Without gratifying a very pardonable curiosity as to the terms of our contract with Mrs Langtry, we may say that there was nothing ridiculous about it. Mrs. Langtry was good enough to think her appearance at our theatre, and the help she would receive, as of the first importance, and, of her own accord, refused other dazzling proposals with which she was deluged.

We fixed upon the pretty part of Blanche Haye in Robertson's comedy *Ours* for Mrs. Langtry's professional appearance, the character being one that was aided by her great natural gifts, and not

calling for too many prospective qualities; while she would be helped in turn, throughout the play, by prominent members of the company. During the rehearsals, the following words accompanied a little present to Mrs. Bancroft: 'With real affection from your pupil (*dull*, but grateful for the pains taken with her).—LILLIE LANGTRY.'

Let us at once say that we have never seen reason to regret having been the means of introducing Mrs. Langtry to the profession in which she has now for years been so earnest a worker as to achieve success far beyond that derived from mere curiosity. She was, besides, so apt and zealous a pupil as to render it a pleasure to help her to success, and her three months' engagement remains among our bright recollections of the Haymarket. These performances commenced on Thursday, January 19th, and evoked an extraordinary degree of public curiosity. The cast of *Ours* was as follows: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Pinero; Angus MacAlister, Mr. H. B. Conway; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. C. Brookfield; Lady Shendryn, Miss Le Thiere; Blanche Haye, Mrs. Langtry; and Mary Netley, Mrs. Bancroft. Morning performances of Goldsmith's comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Mr. Burnand's new comedy were given every Thursday, and of *Ours* every Saturday. The playbill also contained the following announcement: 'Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft beg to state that their rights in the Robertson comedies will shortly expire. *Ours*, *Caste*, and *School*, therefore, can only be played again for a fixed number of nights under their management, as opportunities may arise, and will then cease to form part of their repertoire.'

Our cast of Goldsmith's fine old play, which was rehearsed in a great hurry, did not seem to us to present any particular or distinctive merit, with the exception of what we always thought a remarkable performance of the small part of Diggory by Mr. Pinero.

NOTES BY MR. BANCROFT.

An invitation from the Prince of Wales to some of the leading London actors, to have the honour of dining at Marlborough House on the evening of February 19th, was among the many gracious acts by which his Royal Highness has honoured, and endeared himself to, the theatrical profession. On this occasion I learnt for the first time that our management—then about seventeen years old—had outlived all former co-existing ones; and as the *doyen* in length of service, though not in years, I found myself honoured by being placed on the right hand of our Royal host. During dinner I counted that the table was laid for thirty-eight, and although I then kept no record, I think I can trust my memory to recall the names of those present. Some imperfect lists of the guests, I know, were published at the time the compliment was paid, so this may be thought a proper opportunity to make the bare record correct: The Prince of

Wales, Prince Leiningen, the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Lytton, Lord Fife, the late Lords Aylesford and Torrington, Lord Londesborough, Lord Carrington, Sir George Wombwell, Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane, Sir Dighton Probyn, Mr. (now Sir) Francis Knollys, Mr. Tyrwhitt-Wilson, Colonel Farquharson, Mr. H. Calcraft, Mr. Charles Hall, Mr. E. F. S. Pigott, Mr. W. H. Russell, Mr. George Augustus Sala, Mr. F. C. Burnand, Mr. George Lewis, Mr. Hollingshead, Mr. Henry Irving, Mr. Hare, Mr. Coghlan, Mr. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. John Clayton, Mr. David James, Mr. George Grossmith, Mr. Edgar Bruce, Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Charles Wyndham, Mr. J. L. Toole, and myself. Mr. Byron, I remember, had also the honour of being invited; but, unhappily, the state of his health compelled him to ask to be excused.

It was at this time, February 22nd, 1882, that a very old lady, whom we had often had the pleasure to meet, passed away at the age of eighty-eight—the Dowager Countess of Essex—who, years gone by, had enthralled the play-going world as 'Kitty Stephens.' Leigh Hunt said that her singing was 'like nothing else to be heard on the stage, and left all competition far behind.' Actors and actresses, like clergymen and barristers, seem to be somewhat remarkable for longevity, which, I have often thought, may be partly due to a constant exercise of the lungs.

Meanwhile, we were deeply engaged upon *Odette*, working in concert with Mr. Clement Scott, to whom we had entrusted its adaptation, although he chose to remain anonymous, modestly preferring that the play should be simply announced as written by M. Sardou. It was a difficult play to manipulate, Sardou having conceived it as a strong protest against the condition of the law of divorce in France, of which an outraged husband could not then avail himself. So violent was the distinguished author on the subject, that he also attacked it from a comical point of view in his admirable Palais Royal comedy, *Divorçons*. This state of affairs differed so materially from the experience of Sir James Hannen and Sir Charles Butt, that it was found necessary in Anglicising the work to make the husband a man who shunned such *exposés*, and chose rather to punish his wife by leaving her as such, and so preventing a marriage with her lover; with a view to perfectly adapt the part to the accent of Modjeska, we left the erring woman a foreigner. In like manner, we increased the importance of the major-domo at the gambling-hell, so admirably acted by Mr. Brookfield; while the part of Lady Walker, greatly written and suggested by Mrs. Bancroft, was of infinite value in her hands to the lighter scenes. In this play, we first had the advantage of Mr. Telbin's services, to whose brush we owed the splendid scene of the villa at Nice, with the exquisitely painted view of its harbour and the Mediterranean. Early in March, the adaptation was read to the company; its rehearsals, which were very prolonged and

painstaking, then commenced, for which Madame Modjeska presently returned from Warsaw. The work was ready for production, as we had arranged, before the end of April. It was impossible to escape the radical fault of the play, to which I have before alluded—the overwhelming strength of the first act, which dwarfed the others. The long absence of the heroine from the stage which followed—until, in fact, the middle of the third act—was another serious blemish, and required, perhaps, more than the many beauties of the closing scenes as compensation.

This drawback recalls a little incident that happened at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on one of my visits, soon after the production of the play, and was amusing enough at the time. A Parisian couple came into the stalls directly the first act had ended, and sat immediately in front of me. By their chatter, it was soon evident that Mademoiselle Pierson, who played Odette, was the great object of their visit and the idol of the lady; the curtain having just fallen upon the favourite actress's great opening scene, and, counting two long French *entr'actes*, full an hour and a half had to elapse before she appeared again. When the second act was about a third over, the lady, who evidently knew nothing of the play, said to her companion, 'Mais, où est Pierson?' Then, at each fresh entrance of a female character, she cried, 'Ah, la voilà!' when up went her opera-glass, to be followed by a regretful, 'Non, ce n'est pas Pierson.' Further and further proceeded the play, which was constantly interrupted by the plaintive question, 'Mais, donc, où est Pierson?' and the querulous reply, 'Tais-toi, ma chère.' At the end of Act II., the lady plainly began to think herself cruelly swindled, and, till the curtain rose again, little more was heard from her than 'Où est Pierson?' The third act commenced with a long scene between men; the little lady grew more and more exasperated, when at last, to her evident relief, quite a crowd of women in evening toilettes entered on the scene. With a sigh of forgiveness she again seized her opera-glass, eagerly scanning the features of each one of them in turn, only to find the object of her adoration still was absent. No words can paint the expression of mingled disgust and anguish she then threw into her inquiry, 'Mais, mon Dieu, mon ami, où donc est Pierson?' When, at length, the charming actress, exquisitely dressed, really entered, and her long-suffering companion whispered triumphantly, 'La voilà, c'est elle; c'est Pierson!' the poor little woman answered, 'Oui, mais allons nous en, il est temps de se coucher maintenant!'

Actors often have the reputation—it may be as erroneously as in many other things, of gauging the worth of a play by the esteem in which they chance to value their individual parts; certainly the foible held good in the case of *Odette*, so far as the original representatives of the husband and wife were concerned. It may be remembered that the former is all-important early and until the middle of the play, while the little anecdote just related explains

how the wife disappears for a long time, and then is paramount in the powerful closing scenes. Adolphe Dupuis, whose great talents justified Sardou's choice of him for the hero, for which he was already too old, when asked what the new play would do, replied, that, 'if the end of it were only as good as its commencement and next act, he should have little doubt of its success; but he greatly feared the catastrophe, in which he was but little concerned, would prove too weak!' while Pierson's answer to the same question was to the effect that, 'after so strong a beginning she dreaded the dulness of the following act, in which she had nothing to do, and which she feared the pathetic ending could hardly save!' There are little plays, the reader will see, on both sides the curtain.

Our English version was more sumptuously placed upon the stage than any play of its *genre* had ever been before, and was now to face the verdict of the public, according to a copy of the original bill of the play:

On Tuesday, April 25, 1882, *will be acted,*

ODETTE:

A NEW PLAY, WRITTEN BY VICTORIEN SARDOU.

The action of the first act is laid in Paris fifteen years ago; the rest of the play occurs at Nice in the present day.

ACT I.—'Who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.'—*Milton.*

ACT II.—'One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'—*Shakespeare.*

ACT III.—'Sweet is revenge
—especially to women.'—*Byron.*

ACT IV.—'She clasp'd her fervent hands,
And the tears began to stream,
Large and bitter, and fast they fell—
Remorse was so extreme.'—*Hood.*

LORD HENRY TREVENE	MR. BANCROFT.
LORD ARTHUR TREVENE	MR. CARNE.
LORD SHANDON	MR. FRANK COOPER.
PRINCE TROUBITZKOY	MR. SMEDLEY.
JOHN STRATFORD	MR. ARTHUR CECIL.
PHILIP EDEN	MR. H. B. CONWAY.
DR. BROADWAY WILKES	MR. OWEN DOVE.
MR. HANWAY	MR. PINERO.
CHEVALIER CARAVANI	SIGNOR MARCHETTI.
NARCISSE	MR. C. BROOKFIELD.
FRANCOIS	MR. GERARD.
JOSEPH	MR. STEWART DAWSON
LADY HENRY TREVENE	MADAME MODJESKA.
LADY WALKER	MRS. BANCROFT.
EVA TREVENE	MISS C. GRAHAME.
MARGARET EDEN	MISS MEASOR.
PRINCESS DE GOERTZ	MISS MARIA DALY.

COUNTESS KAROLA	Miss Ruth Francis.
MRS. HANWAY	Miss Florence Wade.
MISS BERTRAM	Miss Giffard.
OLGA	Miss Warden.

Madame Modjeska received the warmest of welcomes on her return to the London stage, and rendered infinite service to the play by her superb acting. The close of the first act created the same *furore* as in Paris, the curtain being raised again and again in answer to the tumult of applause, and made us fear the like excitement could not be rekindled. The second act (which was greatly improved by subsequent cutting) was thought too long; but the splendid interview at the end of the third between the long-parted husband and wife was loudly cheered, chiefly owing to Madame Modjeska's fine acting. The effect of the end was weakened through the lateness of the hour at which the curtain finally fell, leaving us in doubt as to the ultimate fate of the play. It proved, however, to be a success, best described, perhaps, by the word *aggravating*, as from week to week, through the comparatively feeble demand for seats any lengthened time in advance, we were kept in doubt as to its real hold upon the public, and whether the play would last through the season, for which period we had guaranteed a costly engagement to Madame Modjeska. All, however, went well—steadily, if slowly; the stalls and best places were nightly taken and quite full, but the play never appealed greatly to the cheaper parts. The result on the production was largely profitable, in spite of the early feeling of insecurity concerning it.

It was in the spring of this year that various ideas and schemes, which had for some time been occasionally discussed between certain leading actors, took more tangible form; and the early meetings, at first informal, held at the pleasant supper-table of that most hospitable of hosts, Henry Irving (in the interesting room belonging to the Lyceum Theatre, which was formerly the meeting-place of the 'Sublime Society of Beef Steaks,' not to be confounded with the more modern but delightful Beefsteak Club), resulted in the foundation of that valuable institution, the Actors' Benevolent Fund. The principal lessees of the London theatres each promised an annual subscription of a hundred pounds, so long as their reign of management might last, and so formed a sound basis, in the shape of a commencing income of over a thousand pounds, upon which the scheme might develop.

I would like to add a few personal remarks on this subject, it being one in which I feel the deepest interest. My own early idea was that all actors, while fulfilling engagements, should pay a tax of twopence in the pound, or at some such sort of rate as might prove sufficient, to be drawn weekly from their various salaries. The chief objection raised to this plan was, what was feared might be thought its inquisitorial nature in the way of disclosing the extent of the actor's income; but as the treasurer of every theatre

must of necessity be acquainted with the amounts of all the salaries he has to pay, he would simply have deducted the arranged percentage, and have sent the gross amount—as from the theatre he represented—to the secretary. Some experience of the fund has not shaken my belief in this system, or some modification of it. I still cannot help regarding such a principle as the best means of preventing the emphatic danger the institution, I fear, now presents, of discouraging the heavy and self-imposed labours of the committee, and also of disheartening the managers, and lessening the degree of their support. Many of them are known to feel that they contribute far too largely in proportion to the often niggardly sums subscribed by some actors who would do well to follow the example of those who are more generous, for such donations surely should be the backbone of the fund. As I ventured to say on one of the occasions when I had the honour to preside at the annual meeting of the fund:

'The great danger I dread is a fear that this association should become more a managers' fund than an actors' fund. From all I can learn of other benevolent societies, no supporters who are placed in a position of control contribute so largely in proportion as the managers do to this fund—or, indeed, with any approach to their liberality. I believe I have said more than enough to secure the good example of the managers being followed in the future. No one yet begged from an actor for charity in vain, so don't refuse me. I ask you, as it were, to give freely in the dark to bring light to others, for I hope to see the Actors' Benevolent Fund a monument to our stability and of our goodness to each other in sickness and in sorrow.

* * * * * *

'I urge you to generously support the Actors' Benevolent Fund. In doing so you declare that misfortune is often undeserved, often inevitable, and you do your best to lessen its sorrows. Remember how many there are who must simply live before they can hope to save, and that to be provident is a luxury many would indulge in were they only able. I ask you to do what other professions do—what authors and painters, lawyers and doctors, have done long ago—to maintain a benevolent fund for the use of those among us who have been less fortunate than ourselves, and who in the fierce fight of life have fallen by the way. I commend to your generosity and to your sympathy—and, may I add, to your wisdom and your sense of justice—the fund created by actors, managed by actors, supported by actors for the relief of actors, and which is destined, I hope and believe, to be the means of permanently destroying much of the misery as common to our own as to every other calling.'

The following letter is so characteristic of the writer, and so clever in itself, that the reader will welcome the space it occupies:

'108, Park Street, Friday, *June* 9, 1882.

'My dear B.,—I send you the promised sun-picture, or photograph, with inscription. Either Monday or Tuesday—whichever is the more convenient, will find me delighted to see the play.

'Now, my dear friend, will you feel offended with an old soldier if he intrudes on your plan of battle by a remark?

'Why are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft taking a back-seat in their own theatre? They efface themselves! Who made the establishment? with whom is it wholly identified? of what materials is it built? There—it's out!

'Your wife's work may be lightened by a selection of those bright comedy parts which she plays without exertion; but *play* she must, and it surely gives her no more trouble to play Polly Eccles than a scene or two in *Odette*.

'Tell Marie, with my love, that there is nothing so destructive as *rest*, if persisted in; you must alter the vowel—it becomes *rust*, and it eats into life. Hers is too precious to let her fool it away; she is looking splendid, and as fresh as a pat of butter. Let us see her in a good romping girl; why don't you get up a version of the *Country Girl?* Let her play Hoyden, and you play Lord Foppington.

'I dare say you will ask me to mind my own business. Well, if you do, I shall say that the leading interests of the Drama, which you and she now represent, are my business; that the regard and affection I have personally entertained for your wife since she was a child—pray excuse me—and the friendship I have felt for you, induced me to repeat what I have heard from more than one person on both sides of the Atlantic.—Ever yours sincerely, Dion Boucicault.'

Much of this kindly-meant advice was as clever as the writer of it, but we had too long 'gone our ways' to follow it, too long been contented to sometimes, in our best judgment, merely aid a good *ensemble* rather than thrust ourselves into all the leading parts, which often we could aid others to better represent.

One with whom the writer of the above letter had been closely associated in earlier days, both as author and actor, and who had lived so long as to have grown to be, at least of its great ornaments, the *doyen* of the English stage—Benjamin Webster—passed away in July at the age of eighty-four or five. His fame as an actor would have been even greater had he never been a manager. For a long time he was lessee of both the Haymarket and Adelphi Theatres, a double care, which often prevented his being perfect in the words of many of his splendid creations; but old lovers of the drama will need no reminder of the force and pathos of his acting as Triplet, Richard Pride, Luke Fielding, in the *Willow Copse;* Robert Landry, the hero of the *Dead Heart;* Joey Ladle, in *No Thoroughfare;* and in scores of plays which followed then in

quicker succession than in these days of interminable 'runs.' Webster must once have been very handsome; his eye was splendid, and his movements always graceful, possibly owing to the fact that in his early struggling days he for a time taught dancing.

Alas! how fleeting is all fame—perhaps in no case more markedly than in the actor's art—for, after all, how few really remember, or now know, much of Webster's services to the stage, and the many great productions, with their remarkable casts, which he gave to it, crowned perhaps by the original representations of some of Bulwer's plays, and the comedies of Douglas Jerrold and Dion Boucicault.

A few words received from Irving are so charmingly expressed as to alone entitle them to a fragment of this chapter.

'15*a*, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W., *July* 25, 1882.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—I shall wear your gift—and a rare one it is—as I wear you, the giver, in my heart.

'My regard for you is not a fading one. In this world there is not too much fair friendship, is there? And I hope it is a gratification to you—it is to me, old friend—to know that we can count alike upon a friend in sorrow and in gladness.—Affectionately yours, HENRY IRVING.'

There is but little else to tell of the closing weeks before our summer holiday. Working ever ahead, we had for a long while been busy on the old Haymarket comedy, the *Overland Route*, and as we had decided to commence our next season with its elaborate revival, for which we had secured valuable additions to our company in Mrs. John Wood and Mr. David James, the rehearsals began—some time before we went away. They were saddened by the great regret of Arthur Cecil's secession from the company, to which for six years he had given his valued aid. Two of his finished performances will be especially remembered as perfect specimens of character-painting—Sir Woodbine Grafton, the dyspeptic Anglo-Indian in *Peril*, and Baron Stein, the Russo-Teutonic spy in *Diplomacy*. Happily this step in no way interfered with our close friendship, which was to be immediately renewed in the little mountain village he loved as we did—Pontresina—and as the words of the accompanying letter will prove:

'Garrick Club, *July* 14, 1882.

'DEAREST MRS. B.,—I beg you and B. to accept this little present, which I offer you as a souvenir of my happy association with you for six years—a longer period than I have ever passed under any other management, and a pleasanter one by far than I can ever expect to pass elsewhere. With every good wish, always yours affectionately, ARTHUR CECIL BLUNT.'

It was then that Mr. Pinero also gave up acting regularly, and pledging himself to long engagements, so that he might devote more time to authorship, in which career his subsequent successes have more than justified the decision we at the time personally regretted. A pleasant sentence which we quote from a good-bye letter he wrote gratified us very much. 'In one's early days, what is known as "sentiment in business" flourished poorly. In the Haymarket Theatre, the actor's willingness to do as much as he can for his managers is outmatched by his manager's anxiety to do more for the actor. I carry away with me a regard for you both, quite unbusiness-like, but which I am glad to acknowledge always and everywhere.'

Another kind expression of farewell from one we have named before, and who had sent us from his own land his delightful books describing his rambles in ours that he loved so well, reached us just as we were leaving England :

'Morley's Hotel, *August* 2, 1882.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—Your kind and gentle farewell word has been received. The only sad thing about coming to England is that one has to go away.

'I think that I leave here, at least, a *few* loving friends who won't forget me. I am sure that I take away with me memories that will always be affectionately cherished. I am truly glad to have your portrait. Remember me to Mrs. Bancroft. I am always her friend and yours.—WILLIAM WINTER.'

So ended a season which had proved to be one of the most successful we had ever known.

When we reached the Engadine, we found the little English church almost completed, and during our stay it was opened with some solemnity, the Bishop of Bedford having come from England to perform the ceremony; while the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, a well-known mountaineer and lover of the glaciers, whose friendship and hospitality we had enjoyed in London, was also present. May we pause a moment to say how highly we have always esteemed the privilege of acquaintance with one whose character must ever ennoble him in the thoughts of those who are, in the true sense, hero-worshippers? for no act of heroism could be greater than his, when, now some five-and-twenty years ago, through a dreadful railway accident, although terribly scalded, wounded, and with a broken leg, he dragged himself from underneath the *débris* of the wrecked train, refusing to allow his own condition, which seemed at the time likely to be fatal, to be relieved until he had ministered what spiritual help he could to those around him who were even nearer unto death.

His lordship, during this stay in the Engadine, remained faithful to his love for the Bel Alp and the Great Aletsch, the largest icefield in Switzerland, for we remember his saying that 'if he might

venture the opinion, the Morterasch, as a glacier, was hardly fit for a gentleman.'

The Prince and Princess Christian were again in Pontresina this year, and her Royal Highness gave a very handsome altar-cloth to the church, in fulfilment of a promise made on her previous visit. There were also other gifts, three of which brought the Church and stage in further union, for Mr. Arthur Cecil gave the books, Mr. Bancroft the bell, while Mrs. Bancroft erected a beautiful memorial window above the altar to the memory of her mother.

The church being opened, we saw no further need for entertainments in its aid, and were glad of this, as there was very cheery company this year in the Engadine ; old friends at Pontresina, and Charles Wyndham, true to his preference for St. Moritz—and who, by the way, unlike ourselves, allows his business affairs to follow him when he takes a holiday, and is consequently often a martyr to telegrams and letters. One of Charles Wyndham's oddities takes the singular form of posting letters or despatching telegrams *to himself*, as reminders of certain things he may promptly wish to do.

On one of our wanderings through the Pontresina woods, we sat upon the bench which had been erected by the kind villagers as a compliment to Mrs. Bancroft, and was inscribed with her name. On the seat we read these words, written in pencil :

'If all the world's a stage, as men repeat,
And all the men and women in it actors,
The more we owe to one who gives the seat,
And saves us all the greed of Swiss contractors.

'And yet, ungrateful still, a fault I trace,
For Bancroft's not the name my faith was built on ;
How gladly would I pay for any place,
If only I might sit by Marie Wilton.'

Later in our ramble, on the hillside above the Samaden road, while watching the woodcutters at work, by way of contrast, we came across this remarkable specimen of the English language affixed to a tree, as a warning to passers-by : 'In the month of Juli and August it will cuttered the wood in the forrest Because by the transport stones also are coming down is it necessary to have care of it.'

Some of us ended our holiday at the Italian lakes ; again attracted by the magnetic Como, we stayed first at Cadenabbia, where we found Mr. Labouchere in the solitary companionship of his cigarettes, peacefully recuperating from the labours of the session, and soon proving that the House of Commons had not robbed him of his fund of good stories.

We were walking in the garden one lovely evening, having arranged to dine late, when we saw (and heard), through the open windows, the crowded *table d'hôte*. In a conspicuous position we also saw, to our surprise, and I think to our amusement, the tired M.P. seated between two well-known dignitaries of the church, and

evidently completing a merry trio. When the meal was over, chancing to have an hotel acquaintance with one of these prelates, we were chatting together by the shore of the lake, and asked how he had got on at dinner. 'Oh, admirably,' he replied. 'My friend and I were so fortunate in our neighbour, a delightful companion. I wonder if you happen to know who the gentleman is? He is sitting over there.'

Under the olive grove the senior member for Northampton was seated in an American rocking-chair surrounded by a halo of smoke.

'Oh,' we answered, 'don't you recognise him?' 'No; is he someone we should have known by sight? People look so different abroad.' 'That is Mr. Labouchere,' we briefly replied. 'Really, you don't say so!'

What those simple words might have meant to convey we never knew, for the speaker hurried off to impart the information to his companion.

Hard by the hotel, and close to the pretty villas built by our friends Signor Piatti and Mr. Heathcote Long, was a shop kept by an old curiosity-dealer, with whom we had rare fun one day. We had been buying some pretty pieces of silk, and, when about to leave, stopped to turn over a tray full of odds and ends, in which old shoe-buckles, stick-handles, medals, coins, supposed relics from Pompeii, trophies from battle-fields, and every conceivable kind of rubbish were mixed together in a wonderful way. In this olla-podrida we came across a mysterious-looking piece of old ironwork which, on closer inspection, amused as immensely. We saw our way to a joke with the *bric-à-brac* merchant, and retired to a distant corner with our treasure, pretending to examine it closely. A friend was passing the little shop at the moment, and we made him a party to the fun, anxiously asking his opinion on the worth of our discovery, and entering into apparent ecstasies, over it, to the amazement of the old Italian, who closely watched us. We weighed it, breathed on it, polished it, whispered over it, then took it to the sunlight and inspected it through a magnifying-glass in various ways. At last we asked the shopkeeper what he would take for the apparent treasure. The wily dealer, completely taken in by our pantomime, was at once alive to its merits, and assured us it was 'a rare specimen.' We cordially agreed, and begged him to be candid as to its being really genuine. 'Mais oui, oui, oui; c'est vraiment—vraiment véritable: et bien remarquable!' 'Combien?' 'Pour vous—mais seulement pour vous—vingt-cinq francs.'

We suggested the five without the twenty. The old man nearly had a fit, and asked us if we wished to rob him. We worked up the scene to a very funny pitch, and were obliged to go away to hide our laughter, saying we would think the matter over.

This wonderful discovery, this veritable antiquity, was, in truth, a broken fragment of worthless old iron, impressed with the Royal

Arms and motto of England, and stamped with these words, 'Barnard, Bishop and Barnards' patent mowing machine!'

Refreshed and feeling young again, we soon started homewards, but took rather a long way round, driving first to Varese, then by Laveno to Lago Maggiore and the Borromean Islands (which, frankly, we thought rather a Roshervillean fraud, and but little worth the trouble of 'interviewing'), thence to Locarno, and, in the first year of its completion, over the stupendous Gothard railway, and through its giant tunnel to Lucerne.

At this point we were less than twenty-four hours from the Haymarket, and our approaching more intimate acquaintance with the characters of Jenny Sebright and Tom Dexter in Tom Taylor's comedy.

A 'FUNERAL NOTE' BY M. E. B.

An odd coincidence was for years connected with our management at the Prince of Wales's Theatre which may be worth telling—its relation, at any rate, will interest the superstitious and amuse the sceptical. I allude to the appearance by the stage-door on the eve of successful productions of a black cat, or rather kitten. The mystic time for this apparition was always night, and each fresh arrival was christened after a leading character of the coming play. It really sounds incredible, but on many Fridays preceding the Saturday productions our little harbinger of good luck ran in. It grew to be recognised by everyone as the foreteller of success; and when we arrived at the theatre on the Saturday, on which day we nearly always produced our plays, or started any new venture, we were greeted by our hall-porter with the news, announced in all seriousness, 'The black cat has arrived, madam.'

For many years our sable friend presented himself at the stage-door, passed through the hall, and ran straight into the theatre. On the Friday night after the last rehearsal of the *School for Scandal* we were leaving the theatre on our way home, and I felt much disappointed that our ghostly visitor had failed us, when before we reached the end of the street, a wee black thing, no bigger than a rat, rushed past us, as if he knew he was late. I stood still to watch, and saw him run through the hall-door, and then went home delighted. The little thing was christened Joseph Surface, and soon became a great pet with everyone; but, unlike his namesake, was a faithful friend. He was never so happy as during rehearsals, for he was on affectionate terms with all the company, and was more like a dog in sagacity. While we were abroad for this holiday he died, and was buried under the Haymarket stage by the servants who had often fondled him. Everyone in the theatre felt a sincere pang of regret at the death of 'dear Joe.' Had I asked either of my friends, Mr. Burnand or Mr. Gilbert, for an epitaph, they doubtless would have forestalled me in suggesting, 'RequiesCAT in pace!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SEASON OF 1882-83.

Lord Wolseley and Tel-el-Kebir—A bright season—Production of the *Overland Route*—*Nearly Seven*—Sardou's *Fedora*—The audience at the *répétition générale*—Sarah Bernhardt's acting—Burning of the Alhambra—Christmas with Edmund Yates at Eastbourne—Death of Miss Kelly—Reminiscence by Mrs. Bancroft—Revival of *Caste*—The acting of Mrs. Stirling—Herman Merivale's adaptation of *Fedora*—Engagement of Mrs. Bernard-Beere and Mr. Coghlan—A sketch by Linley Sambourne—Reappearance of Mr. Hare as Sam Gerridge in last representation of *Caste*—A memorable evening—Stage tributes: a story of herrings—*School*—Death of Mr. Charles Walter—Ominous prognostications with regard to *Fedora*—Its great success—Removal to Berkeley Square—Banquet to Henry Irving at St. James's Hall—Farewell supper given to him at the Garrick Club by Mr. Bancroft—Mr. Hare's proposal of his host's health—Holiday at Homburg—Letter from the Duke of Albany—Death of Mr. Dutton Cook—A visit to Zermatt—The Matterhorn.

OH, the penalty that has to be paid on returning from a holiday by those who, like ourselves, never allow letters to be sent after them! However, among the basketfuls of correspondence we found waiting this year was one delightful letter written from Alexandria on August 18th by Lord (then Sir Garnet) Wolseley, in which he cheerily foretold the victory of Tel-el-Kebir in these words: 'The "army" keeps arriving daily, and I hope very soon to be in a position to bring Mr. Arabi to book.'

The realization of this prophecy, and the curious incident of a strange atmospheric phenomenon caused by the comet of that year, and which immediately preceded it, prompted some verses, that were sent to the hero of the achievement and thus acknowledged:

'War Office, *March* 6, 1883.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I am very glad Mr. Bancroft induced you to send me your lines on Tel-el-Kebir, for I like them extremely.

'The word-painting is admirable, and the whole incident is told most feelingly and well.

'I shall put the little poem away among my treasures. Many, many thanks for it.—Sincerely yours, WOLSELEY.'

Advantage was taken of the recess to refurnish and redecorate parts of the theatre, which certainly was more an extravagance than a necessity. This was throughout a bright season, from first to last, or 'find to finish,' in hunting parlance; an almost unbroken one of high success; the career of crowded houses being checked for a little while at Christmas-time, the immediate cause of

which, beyond the then despotic rule of King Pantomime, will be better alluded to later on.

In the *Overland Route* both the saloon and the upper deck of the s.s. *Poonah*, one of the older type, of the fine P. and O. fleet, and consequently better suited to our purpose, were, as far as possible, reproduced, after months of labour, by Mr. Hann—thanks to the opportunities Mr. Sutherland had so kindly placed at our disposal. The Eastern trip, written of in a previous chapter, now became of professional value in the reproduction of the many familiar details of life on ship-board ; we were also fortunate in securing some real niggers, lascars, and ayahs, who lent great reality to the pictures. The scene of the last act, when the ship had run aground upon a coral reef in the Red Sea, was magnificently painted by Mr. Telbin, whose acquaintance with the East and the Holy Land enabled him to boldly treat the subject. Our nightly voyage in the *Simoom* was in the fairest weather, for our revival of the old comedy began the season brilliantly, and was received with all the favour given to a successful new production. This was the detailed part of the playbill : On Saturday, October 7th, 1882, Tom Taylor's Comedy, *The Overland Route*. (The action of the first and second acts takes place on board the P. and O. steamship *Simoom ;* the third act passes on a desert island in the Red Sea.) Sir Solomon Fraser, K.C.B., Mr. Alfred Bishop ; Major McTurk, Mr. Everill ; Captain Clavering, Mr. Smedley ; Captain Sebright, R.N., Mr. Vernon ; Mr. Colepepper, Mr. C. Brookfield ; Mr. Lovibond, Mr. David James ; Tom Dexter, Mr. Bancroft ; Captain Smart, Mr. Carne ; Mr. Hardisty, Mr. Gerrard ; Tottle, Mr. Stewart Dawson ; Moleskin, Mr. Fabert ; Limpet, Mr. Elliot ; Mrs. Sebright, Mrs. Bancroft ; Mrs. Lovibond, Mrs. John Wood ; Mary Colepepper, Miss Tilbury ; Mrs. Rabbits, Miss Maria Daly ; Grimwood, Miss N. Phillips. Passengers, stewards, crew, lascars, punkahwallahs, ayahs, etc.

NOTES BY S. B. B.

Before I tell the reader, what I hope will prove of some interest, the first news we had of *Fedora*, let me mention a clever little monologue called *Nearly Seven*, written and acted by Charles Brookfield, which was the *lever-de-rideau* during the run of the *Overland Route ;* also that the author of that comedy being unhappily no more, we could not seek his help for certain revisions of his play, which were made, however, with great regard for his work. A very amusing and successful scene between Mrs. John Wood and herself, which became a feature of the evening, was cleverly written by Mrs. Bancroft, who also supplied an admirable addition to a dialogue between Mrs. Wood and David James, both of whom were good enough to think it of real value to their parts.

Sardou, we knew, had devoted some months to the writing of a new play, also that Sarah Bernhardt was to create a great part, but

all the account he so far divulged of his story was that it dealt with the modern terror—Nihilism. Masterly as a reader and inventor of stage business for his own works, he soon after had his play in full rehearsal at the Vaudeville, when I received the following :

'La pièce de Sardou est très interessante : sa lecture a fait à tous, une profonde impression, et Sarah, qui l'entendait pour la seconde fois n'a pu s'empêcher de verser des torrents de larmes.

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'En somme, Sarah, rôle magnifique écrit très specialement et très habilement pour elle. Pour Berton, un beau rôle dans les cords de celui qu'il a joué dans *Dora*. Tous les autres rôles sont des compasses à l'exception d'un rôle de femme, épisodique, mais spirituelle, gai, que Madame Bancroft jouerait divinement s'il n'était pas indigne de son talent.'

Fedora was produced in December, and I felt the importance of witnessing the *répétition générale*, which in Paris has all the force and effect of a *première*, excepting only that the audience is restricted to the privileged, so Mr. Conway kindly qualified himself to replace me as the ship's doctor, and let me free to go to Paris. On the eve of the big rehearsal I dined with my friend Pierre Berton, when he told me the story of the play. I confess, from its bald relation, I reluctantly arrived at the sure conviction that my journey was in vain, and that the eagerly expected work, which was keeping all Paris in a fever of expectation, and formed the main topic of the Boulevardiers, would prove to be but a bloodthirsty melodrama.

On the following day, however, I found myself among the favoured occupants of the stalls, one of my immediate companions being Mr. M. L. Mayer, to whom lovers of French plays have been so indebted for years in London, and who was interested with me in the English rights, while on my other side was 'Theoc,' the pleasant Parisian contributor to the *World*. We were surrounded by literary and artistic celebrities : there, in a *baignoire*, was Alexandre Dumas, the dramatist's great rival ; above, in the balcony, sat Blanche Pierson and Maria Legault, looking down on the scene of their recent triumphs in *Odette*. Coquelin and Got came up the Avenue de l'Opéra from the classic home of Molière ; Alphonse Daudet and Georges Ohnet in close companionship ; the dreaded critic Francesque Sarcey ; Auguste Vitu, of the *Figaro ;* Albert Wolff, whose strange features are so ably reproduced in the Musée Grevin, the Tussaud's of Paris, are among the scores of names, owned by those of Boulevard 'light and leading,' I could recall.

After some delay, the curtain, without the warning three knocks,

was raised upon an empty stage ; some person in authority then stepped forward to make an announcement, which seemed to foretell postponement ; postponement it was, but only for an hour, the cause being the non-arrival of the great Sarah's gowns. After anathemas hurled at the *modiste*, we consoled ourselves with cigarettes upon the Boulevard. Presently we returned to our places, Sardou and the managers soon afterwards came to a large space kept for them in the stalls, and the play began. In five minutes the audience was under a spell which did not once abate throughout the whole four acts. Never was treatment of a strange and dangerous subject more masterly ; never was acting more superb than Sarah showed that day to those privileged to witness it. Rachel, I think, has been described as 'the panther of the stage :' her feline mantle certainly has descended to Sarah Bernhardt ; Sardou's delighted appreciation of the perfect rendering of his heroine being only equalled by his pleased acceptance of the congratulations which were showered upon him at the end of every act. Needless to say there was not a moment's hesitation as to buying the English rights in the play.

Among other news from London at this time was the burning of the Alhambra Theatre ; happily, unlike the previous terrible catastrophe at Vienna, unattended by loss of life. The calamity, however, dealt a serious blow to the theatres at the time—it proved enough of a storm to wreck the good ship *Simoom*, and so far put a check upon our *Overland Route*, that I did not think it worth while, on my return home, to resume my part. Mrs. Bancroft also resigned the coquetries of Jenny Sebright to other hands, which allowed us to spend a brief but well-remembered Christmas holiday, in companionship with Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Yates, in the comfortable old Albion Hotel at Eastbourne.

Yates was in great form, and, among many of his excellent stories, Mrs. Bancroft reminds me of the following, which he told with all the verve of a clever actor, a power evidently inherited from his gifted parents, which amused us immensely. After an unfortunate night railway accident, in which, unhappily, many people were more or less injured, a search was made amongst the *débris* for the victims. While two railway guards were looking about with the aid of lighted lanterns, they suddenly came across a prostrate figure, wedged in between some of the broken timber. This poor man was *apparently* so injured that the whole of one side of his body, and especially his face, was, as it were, forced in an upward direction. The two guards, discovering this, immediately set to work to endeavour, by one pulling one way and one pulling another, to get him straight. They began their operations ; the chief man directing his mate to pull up one side with a jerk, whilst he held firmly by the other. While this violent effort was going on, the poor victim cried out to them piteously (but for a long time in vain), 'No, no ; *born so, born so !*' It was some seconds before the two

men ascertained that this apparent result of the railway accident was in reality a physical deformity.

It was at the close of this year that Miss Kelly, the once famous actress of the *Sergeant's Wife* and other dramas, died at the great age of ninety-three. Shortly before she passed away, I missed a pleasant opportunity of making her acquaintance in the companionship of Toole and Irving, who went to see her in her little country home. It was she who built the Royalty Theatre, which was so long a nursery for amateurs, where so many leaders of our stage made their first appearances in times gone by ; and hers was the life which had twice been placed in peril by maniacs who were in love with her, and resented the popular actress's refusal of their offers by firing at her with a pistol from the pit. This old lady, bright and cheery to the close of her long life, brings to my remembrance a quaint and interesting friend of ours, a description of whom I am sure will be far more amusing from Mrs. Bancroft's pen :

'Amongst my numerous acquaintances I have met with some curious people with characteristics—possibly eccentricities—that might be passed over by many, but, as I have before said, from my childhood I have never failed to detect these peculiarities. Until her death, I had the pleasure of knowing a very eccentric and interesting old maiden lady. I say the pleasure, because I had a great regard for her. Her nature was kindly and amiable, and no one ever heard her say an ungenerous thing of man, woman, or child. She never joined in malicious gossip, and when she was unable to praise would be silent—a noble example to womankind, I take it.

'Well, this dear lady, who was eighty-five years old, remembered many extraordinary events. Her anecdotes of days gone by were very diverting ; and, although she dressed in the most Noah's Ark sort of fashion, and spoke in the most old-world way, her nature was as bright as a girl's. She loved the society of young people, mixing herself up with their lives with the keenest enjoyment. All her recollections of the past were merry ; she seemed to be ever happy, and one day when asked if she would like to live to a tremendous age, she laughingly replied, "Oh, I don't much care ; only I hope when I do die they'll bury me in a cheerful churchyard."

'At an evening party once there had been a great deal of classical music, which was evidently somewhat too serious for her taste, for, when asked what she thought of it, she replied in her usual cheery manner, "Oh, it is most charming! *Do* you think you could get them to play 'Tommy, make room for your uncle'? It is charmingly amusing, and I should be mightily obleeged."

'Mr. Bancroft one evening took her in to dinner, and remarked upon her wonderful health. The vivacious old lady replied that she had never known pain or ache in her life. "Not even toothache?" "Oh, never ; don't know what the dreadful thing means."

"Not a simple headache?" "Oh no, never; I think it *too* ridic'lous!" "Nor ever a heartache?" The old lady at once answered archly, smiling sweetly at her companion, "*Not yet!*"

'I remember being present at an "at home" she gave. Her rooms were most quaintly furnished, and one seemed to live far, far back in the past as one gazed at her spinet, and her old-fashioned harp. Her dress comprised a pink silk skirt, trimmed with a matchless lace flounce, a low black velvet bodice, a satin scarf of the family tartan, for she was proud of her Scotch descent; open-worked stockings, and sandalled shoes. She carried a bag of some beautiful material over her arm, her "get up" being completed by a necklace of old coral medallions and long ear-rings to match. Her hair was plaited in a small knot at the back, and three lank ringlets hung on each side of her face. She received her guests with a low curtsey, and was the cheeriest of hostesses. There was a great deal of music, but not a single sad air was played. The old lady related anecdotes in abundance, and her great anxiety was to see all the young people who were there happy and amiable

'She had a habit of speaking her thoughts aloud, and this peculiarity sometimes caused much amusement. A young lady who had a very pretty voice was asked to sing, and at once consented. The guests gathered round. Our old friend sat near the singer, and commented audibly on the song with delightful unconsciousness, which made it hard for anyone to preserve a grave countenance. The song commenced:

'"Kathleen Mavourneen,

('"Oh, what a charming name!")

the gray dawn is breaking,

('"Yes, I've seen it often, coming home from a ball.")

The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill,

('"Oh yes, I know, in Switzerland.")

The lark, from her light wings, the bright dew is shaking,

('"Oh, the dear little thing!")

Kathleen Mavourneen—what, slumbering still!

('"Perhaps she was up late, poor dear.")

Oh, dost thou not know that this night we must sever?
Oh, dost thou not know, love, this night we must part?

('"Oh, how can she be so cruel!")

It may be for years, or it may be for ever,

('"Oh, gracious, what a long time!")

Then wake from thy slumber, thou voice of my heart!"

('"Get up, you lazy hussy!")

'I need not say that it was with extreme difficulty the young vocalist could continue, and when the old lady shouted "Get up, you lazy hussy!" we were all convulsed.

'Just as her last guests were preparing to go, our hostess sat down to the spinet to play, as she said, "God save the King."'

We began the new year well enough, for on its first day Mr. Pinero commenced a play which we had commissioned him to write for us; we also resumed the rehearsals for our coming farewell revival of *Caste*, which had been interrupted by the trip to Paris. This performance by us was a case of 'now or never,' as our rights in the Robertson comedies were, by arrangement with the author's son, to end in the following summer. This dear old friend—the king of its brilliant author's works—was acted on Saturday, January 20th, with the following distribution of the seven well-known characters, our two selves being now the sole members of the first cast: George D'Alroy, Mr. H. B. Conway; Captain Hawtree, Mr. Bancroft; Eccles, Mr. David James; Sam Gerridge, Mr. C. Brookfield; Marquise de Saint Maur, Mrs. Stirling; Esther Eccles, Miss Gerard; and Polly Eccles, Mrs. Bancroft—(positively for the last times).

These performances enjoyed all their old success, and we were again most fortunate with regard to the acting of those new to the play; but younger members of the cast will forgive our saying that the revival was chiefly memorable to us by the sincere pleasure we had in persuading that perfect mistress of her art, Mrs. Stirling, to play the Marquise de Saint Maur, which proved of infinite value, and whose influence at the rehearsals, owing to the unwearying pains she took throughout them, was always of good effect; also by our good fortune in replacing the magnificent performance of poor George Honey as Eccles by David James's equally able treatment of the part. Comparisons often enough are indeed odious; but although we thought it impossible ever to realize another Eccles, so keen is our remembrance of each intonation in every speech as originally rendered, it is but an honest tribute to Mr. James's acting to admit that in some scenes we preferred its humour. We can imagine no funnier treatment of many lines, and laugh now heartily at the remembrance of his bibulous assurance to the Marquise that he was 'always at home on Thursdays from three to six.' I fear this must be owned to be a 'gag,' for which Mr. James was very much obliged to Mrs. Bancroft, and which, I think, the author, had he lived, would have gratefully added to his book of the play.

From the time of the resolve to produce *Fedora*, we were constantly at work upon its preparation; and gave Sardou's manuscript to Mr. Herman Merivale, and asked if he would like to undertake its adaptation. Without being at all keen upon the matter, he promised to take the book down to Eastbourne, where he then lived, and see what he thought about it. The next day came a letter to say that he had put off opening the parcel until quite late at night, when, after glancing over a few pages, he grew so engrossed in its story that he found it impossible to get to bed

until the last sentence of the fascinating play was devoured. Naturally we were delighted with this opinion, and arranged for the work to be commenced at once ; the adaptation was admirably and speedily finished, being a labour of pleasure. Great aid was given to Mr. Merivale, who, I am sure, would be the first to acknowledge it, in the character that had to be concocted, and written up for herself, by Mrs. Bancroft.

After careful thought we decided to entrust the splendid part of Fedora to Mrs. Bernard-Beere, and engaged Mr. Coghlan to play the hero. As for ourselves, we were satisfied to take two characters which the French describe as 'side-dishes,' and to give them all the value in our power. So for a few weeks things rested, until the long rehearsals were begun.

Meanwhile our faithful friend *Caste* pursued its way. A pleasant souvenir of the old play came to us from Linley Sambourne, who sent us the original of one of the earliest drawings he made for *Punch* when quite a youngster. It is a sketch of Papa Eccles, who had evidently just 'met a friend round the corner,' supported by Captain Hawtree and Sam Gerridge. In the artist's own words : 'It was done early in the year 1867, when I was just beginning to draw, and twenty-two years of age. I went to the pit to delight in *Caste*, and drew the sketch from memory. The late Mark Lemon selected it from others for me to put on wood for *Punch*, and it appeared in the number for July 20th, 1867.'

It chanced that our friend and comrade, Mr. Hare, was not acting in his own theatre at this time, and the idea occurred to us that it would be delightful to all three if, on the last night of *Caste*, under our management, he would appear in his original character of the gasman. His answer to a letter suggesting this happy thought will best speak his feelings on the subject :

'The Red House, Hornton Street, Campden Hill, *March* 6, 1883.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Believe me, I reciprocate all the kind feelings expressed in your letter. It will be to me a source of the greatest pleasure to be once more "Sam" to your "Polly" on the occasion of your last appearance in *Caste*, associated as that play is, in my mind, with such a host of pleasant and kindly memories. Those old times were indeed happy ones, and the recollection of them is not easily to be effaced.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Bancroft, always yours, JOHN HARE.'

The evening of Friday, April 13th, 1883, will long be remembered by us, and is not likely to fade easily from the memory of anyone present. There had been a very extraordinary demand for all the reserved seats ; many persons of eminence and distinction anxious to be present applied, to our great regret, too late, while the crowd at the doors leading to the cheaper parts of the theatre thronged the Haymarket from an early hour in the day. It was apparent,

directly the curtain rose, that the audience was exceptional, and that some strange magnetic influence affected both auditor and actor; the reception of all the familiar characters was very prolonged, while of Mr. Hare, the moment he appeared as Sam Gerridge, and of ourselves—no other word will so express the demonstration as—affectionate. It would look like exaggeration to describe the enthusiasm which followed the comedy, or the scene that occurred at the close of it. 'Polly Eccles' had been throughout the evening the recipient of magnificent presents of flowers, one gigantic bouquet bearing her name in roses. At the end of the play these beautiful offerings were all banked up in every direction on the humble furniture of the 'Little House in Stangate,' when, time after time, she bowed her adieux to the excited audience, standing in turn with her old comrade, whose presence had so graced the occasion, with Mrs. Stirling, and finally again and again with her hand in Captain Hawtree's.

Mrs. Bancroft has a story to tell here:

'This wonderful floral tribute, which was followed by the gift of a bracelet composed of large brilliants, and inscribed, "From Captain Hawtree to Polly Eccles," was strong in contrast to my first experience of souvenirs in a theatre, which takes me back again to childhood's days.

'I have a vivid recollection of acting in a temporary theatre built on the beach of a small fishing town somewhere in the North, and will relate an incident which abruptly terminated one of my performances. The floor of our dressing-room was simply the sandy shore, and there was a wooden plank close to the table, upon which I stood, preparing for a Highland-fling to be danced by me. Suddenly an unusually high tide took place, and the water made rapid progress into this room, so I hurried upstairs, but not before my thin shoes had been well filled with sea-water. The reader, who may know the dance-step of a fling, will be able to imagine the effect my wet shoes had upon the stage. I must have caused a great sensation amongst the fishwives, who, unable to control their ecstasies, threw herrings on to the stage to me with such exclamations as "The bonnie wee bairnie!" "She's just like ma Maggie!" "Oh, the dearie!" "Fling her a herrin'!" I intended to take no notice of this eccentric form of bouquet (so horrified was I), but someone called out from the wings, "Pick them up and acknowledge them, or there will be a riot." So, frightened out of my life I forced an alarmed smile upon my face, gathered up the herrings, which slipped from my hands as soon as I took hold of them, and got off the stage as quickly as possible, my small arms being laden with these fishy offerings. The dance was loudly encored; but before I had got half through its repetition an alarm was raised: "The sea is on us! The sea is on us! Save the wee lassie!"

The lights suddenly went out, and the scrimmage was awful. I was seized and thrust into a large fish-basket (I smelt it!) and carried off on some man's back, who, I believe, jumped on the stage to rescue me. I can smell those herrings still, and have never cared for fish since that experience!

Then came a cordial but brief adieu to Jack Poyntz and dear 'Nummy' Tighe in *School*. These performances we were compelled to limit to three weeks, our version of Sardou's play being almost ripe for production, and could not wisely be further delayed, as the season was already advancing. Had we chosen, we might easily have continued the old Robertsonian favourites until its close; but we dreaded the renewal of such monotony, for whenever we had of late years resumed the long familiar parts, the intervals seemed to disappear, and we almost felt as though we had never acted any others. After playing Polly Eccles and Naomi Tighe for the last times, Mrs. Bancroft received numerous requests for various things she had worn in those characters, and some time was spent in selecting shoes, gloves, or flowers, and sending them to their new owners. I remember her looking for a long time at Polly's holland apron (marked 'Polly Eccles' on the band), and bidding it an affectionate 'good-bye.'

The letter from her 'adored Jack Poyntz,' which Naomi Tighe read so many times in the last act, was given, at his request, to Mr. Hastings. A few things were retained, which in years to come will be looked upon by us as relics of bright and happy days gone by.

During this farewell to *School*, and while my heavy work with the rehearsals of *Fedora* was at its height, we lost the services of our secretary and business manager, Mr. Charles Walter, who had enjoyed our confidence in that capacity for seven years. Always a man of delicate health, his cheery nature fought so hard, and he had recovered so frequently from many attacks, that his death, after a brief illness, was a great shock, and cast a gloom over the theatre, where he was very popular. This calamity gave me much extra work at a time of great anxiety, and I decided for the future to divide the duties combined by Mr. Walter, and engaged Mr. Edward Russell, who had long held a responsible position with Mr. Irving, as treasurer, giving the office of secretary to Mr. G. F. Bashford, who was well qualified for the post. He formerly held a commission in the Scots Greys, and after he left the service had married Mrs. Bancroft's sister Augusta.

Loud were the ominous prognostications with regard to the fate of *Fedora* in England. Grave head-shakings emphasised the opinions so freely urged that the subject would be found repugnant. Outspoken were the thoughts that the task was hopeless without Sarah Bernhardt. One little incident, perhaps, will best illustrate these forebodings.

A dear friend of ours, whom we will call Mr. 'X.' (as he would doubtless prefer to remain 'an unknown quantity'), called one day, less than a week before the announced date of this 'rash' production, when there was some talk between us to this effect:

Mr. X.: 'Frankly, my dear B., what do you think your new play will really do?'

Mr. B.: 'Frankly, it will be an emphatic success; and, as it did in Paris, will draw the town.'

Mr. X.: 'I'm delighted, if you truly think so.'

Mr. B.: 'Between ourselves, I have no doubt about it, or a moment's dread of any other result. You know the extent of my original belief in it—to say nothing of the big figures dealing with a Sardou play means; now that the dull and depressing period of the long rehearsals—when one wonders if the work in hand was ever worth the labour—has passed, its value is manifest.'

Mr. X.: 'And Mrs. Bernard-Beere?'

Mr. B.: 'Will astonish all of you. Of course she is not the divine Sarah, and we almost regret that she went to Paris to see her.'

Mr. X.: 'Why?'

Mr. B.: 'Sarah Bernhardt is now, I take it, the great tragic actress of the world. I never saw Rachel, but I can't imagine her being greater than Sarah at her best. Now for Mrs. Bernard-Beere to really imitate her is impossible. A contralto must never try to sing soprano songs. This, when Mrs. Bernard-Beere began her rehearsals, she, to some extent, wished to do; but, with patience and friendly guidance, her quick intelligence soon appreciated the difference between a slavish imitation of an individual, and adapting to another model much of the masterly stage-business which was, in truth, the invention of the author.'

Mr. X.: 'I think I follow your argument, my dear B.'

Mr. B.: 'Certainly we never met anyone who would more readily listen to suggestions, or work harder to embody them with life and meaning.'

Mr. X.: 'Is the play much altered from the French?'

Mr. B.: 'Very little; Merivale's work is admirable. I have ventured in the stage-management to slightly modify a few painful details in the first act, and to trust for their full effect to the imagination of the audience.* Remember the end of the second act of *Ours;* once *show* the troops passing the window and, in my poor judgment, the play is destroyed. I think you will acknowledge the scene I allude to is the most powerful instance of stage-craft and construction you can remember. The smaller parts require very careful "coaching;" the least movement of everyone concerned has its meaning.'

* As a proof of the power of imagination—if properly worked on—a very old stager said to me, after seeing this scene, 'My dear B., when the surgeon went into the bedroom, and the doors were shut, I give you my word I could hear the dying man's moans through the walls.'

Mr. X.: 'Then what on earth do the adverse rumours afloat mean?'

Mr. B.: 'I can't imagine; I can only ask you not to contradict them.'

Mr. X.: '*Not* to contradict them!'

Mr. B.: 'By no means.'

Mr. X.: 'Why, there are people, and this is really the reason of my coming to you at this busy time, going about, not ill-naturedly, but convinced from report that their chatter is true, saying that *Fedora* will be the direst failure on record; and one of them goes so far as to add that he knows for a fact another play is being rehearsed *sub rosa* in the afternoons, all concerned in it being under the strictest pledge of secrecy, so as to quickly stem the tide of disaster that is sure to flow.'

Mr. B. (laughing heartily): 'Let him chatter; don't curb his tongue. He means us no harm, and certainly is doing us good.'

Mr. X.: 'Good! Tell me why you think so.'

Mr. B.: 'In things theatrical there is nothing more valuable than a revulsion of feeling. If our audience, next Saturday, is prepared but for failure, it will only add warmth to their reception of a success.'

Mr. X.: 'And that you feel you are on the heels of?'

Mr. B.: 'Yes, and with nothing, that I can foresee, likely to trip us up.'

Mr. X.: 'Good-bye, my dear B.; though, for all you say, I shall go to my stall with anxiety.'

Mr. B.: 'It will be all right. I only wish it was over, for I feel rather worn out, the work having been unusually heavy.'

That these sanguine expectations were verified is matter of stage history. The success of the play was phenomenal, and never for a moment in doubt. News of its magnificent reception was telegraphed to Sardou, who was staying at Marly, all efforts having failed to induce him to cross the Channel to pay his first visit to London and assist at a *première*.

We now give a copy of the playbill, and acknowledge how much we owed to the good-nature and courtesy of M. Demidoff, of the Russian Embassy, for a careful lesson in the proper sound of the national names and sentences used in the play.

On Saturday, May 5, 1883, will be acted

FEDORA:

A play in four acts, written by Victorien Sardou. The English version by Herman Merivale. The first act passes at St. Petersburg; the rest of the play in Paris.

LORIS IPANOFF	MR. CHARLES COGHLAN.
JEAN DE SIRIEX	MR. BANCROFT.
PIERRE BOROFF	MR. CARNE.
M. ROUVEL	MR. SMEDLEY.

M. VERNET	MR. H. FITZPATRICK.
DR. LORECK	MR. ELLIOT.
GRETCH	MR. C. BROOKFIELD.
BOLESLAS LASINSKI	MR. FRANCIS.
TCHILEFF	MR. F. EVERILL.
DÉSIRÉ	MR. GERRARD.
DMITRI	MISS JULIA GWYNNE.
KIRILL	MR. STEWART DAWSON.
IVAN	MR. VERNON.
PRINCESS FEDORA ROMAZOFF	MRS. BERNARD-BEERE.
COUNTESS OLGA SOUKAREFF	MRS. BANCROFT.
BARONESS OCKAR	MISS HERBERT.
MADAME DE TOURNIS	MISS MERRILL.
MARKA	MISS R. TAYLOR.

The play's wonderful success allows us a pause to speak of other things, and as our changes of residence have hitherto been noted, it may be mentioned, especially as a manager's private address becomes somewhat public by the Lord Chamberlain's license requiring it to be printed on every playbill, that, having felt the want of sun very much in the house we had occupied for eight years in Cavendish Square, owing to its northern aspect, we had often sought to change it. A few months previously we came across a pleasant house, not too large, in Berkeley Square, which gave us again our beloved trees, among the finest in London, and supplied the lack of sun ; so we bought the lease, and in the following summer first lived there. Later on, our interest in this new home was not lessened by Lady Molesworth, whose friendship we shall be always proud of having enjoyed, telling us that she was married from the same house, nor by learning that within a few doors Mrs. Bancroft's maternal great-grandfather had once resided.

On the 4th of July, one of the greatest compliments I can remember ever being offered to an actor was paid to Henry Irving, and through him to the entire theatrical world, in the banquet which was given in his honour at St. James's Hall, prior to his first visit to America, under the presidency of the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Coleridge—an event only to be paralleled by reference to the great festival when John Kemble left the stage. To name those who filled the great hall on the occasion would be to print a list of England's celebrities ; not only in literature and art, for leaders in almost every phase of intellect and eminence were present, in which sense it eclipsed the Charles Kean banquet. There are more appropriate places to chronicle the event in detail than the pages of this book, which, however, would be incomplete without this brief allusion to it.

I performed rather a feat, which was entirely unpremeditated, on the memorable evening. *Fedora* was acted at an hour that allowed me to sit down to the soup, although I had to disappear with the fish. In the second and third acts of the play, I wore evening dress. Some eight minutes before the end of the second act, and during the interval, I was free, and on the spur of the moment re-

turned at full speed to St. James's Hall, just as I was—made up as the French diplomate, my head suggesting a kind of younger Duc d'Aumale. I was fortunate enough to enter the room at the happy moment when Lord Coleridge was proposing the chief toast, and able to remain long enough to hear the greater part of Irving's reply. Of course I knew my time almost to a second, and was back on the Haymarket stage, somewhat out of breath, for I made both journeys on foot, without causing any delay. When I had finished my part, I went again to the hall, and was lucky enough to hear Mr. Lowell, one of the best and most amusing orators I ever listened to, conclude an eloquent speech.

In the following week another banquet of some interest took place, which may be more fully dwelt on in this book, as it emanated from myself. The idea occurred to me to give a farewell supper to Irving before his departure, and to let it have the distinctive character of inviting none but actors to it. Feeling that nowhere could it be given so appropriately, I ventured to ask the sub-committee of the Garrick Club if, under the special circumstances, it might be allowed to take place in the chief dining-room at midnight. Greatly to my delight, the kindness of acquiescence was accorded to me, Sir Algernon Borthwick being good enough to write my request was 'an honour to the club.' The room, so wonderfully appropriate for the purpose, was arranged to accommodate ninety guests, whose names it may be interesting to preserve :

Mr. James Anderson,
Mr. G. W. Anson,
Mr. F. Archer,
Mr. George Alexander,
Mr. H. Ashley,
M. Pierre Berton,
Mr. Lawrence Barrett,
Mr. Wilson Barrett,
Mr. George Barrett,
Mr. J. H. Barnes,
Mr. Lionel Brough,
Mr. Dion G. Boucicault,
Mr. Kyrle Bellew,
Mr. Alfred Bishop,
Mr. C. Brookfield,
Mr. J. Billington,
Mr. Edgar Bruce,
Mr. G. F. Bashford,
Mr. W. Creswick,
Mr. J. Carne,
Mr. John Clayton,
Mr. Arthur Cecil,
Mr. H. B. Conway,
Mr. Charles Coghlan,
Mr. J. S. Clarke,
Mr. George Conquest,
Mr. Arthur Dacre,
Mr. Stewart Dawson,
Mr. F. Everill,
Mr. W. G. Elliot,
Mr. J. Fernandez,
Mr. David Fisher,
Mr. H. Fitzpatrick,
Mr. Corney Grain,
Mr. George Grossmith,
Mr. E. Girardot,
Mr. Hare,
Mr. Augustus Harris,
Mr. Howe,
Mr. E. Hastings,
Mr. Irving,
Mr. David James,
Mr. H. Jackson,
Mr. W. H. Kendal,
Mr. Walter Lacy,
Mr. F. Leslie,
Mr. H. J. Loveday,
M. Marius,
Mr. J. Maclean,
Mr. W. Mackintosh,
Mr. T. Mead,
Mr. Henry Neville,
Mr. Alfred Nelson,
Mr. A. W. Pinero,
Mr. R. Pateman,
Mr. Howard Paul,
Mr. H. Paulton,
Mr. John Ryder,
Mr. E. Righton,
Mr. Alfred Reed,
Mr. Forbes-Robertson,
Mr. J. T. Raymond,
Mr. E. Russell,
Mr. E. Smedley,
Mr. R. Soutar,
Mr. Arthur Stirling,
Mr. C. Sugden,
Mr. Herbert Standing,
Mr. T. Swinbourne,
Mr. Bram Stoker,
Mr. W. Terriss,
Mr. H. Beerbohm Tree,
Mr. T. Thorne,
Mr. Edward Terry,
Mr. J. G. Taylor,
Mr. J. L. Toole,
Mr. W. H. Vernon,
Mr. Percy Vernon,
Mr. Hermann Vezin,
Mr. R. H. Wyndham,
Mr. Charles Warner,
Mr. E. S. Willard,
Mr. E. N. Wenman,
Mr. E. D. Ward.

Engagements in America and the provinces robbed me of a few friends, whose names may possibly be missed from the list, and whose presence would have delighted me.

Excepting only Mr. Bashford and Mr. Russell, our secretary and treasurer, and Mr. Bram Stoker and Mr. Loveday, so long and closely associated with Mr. Irving, all present were actors. The gathering was commented upon as a 'supper of honour,' and it may be interesting to preserve here the speech in which I proposed the health of my chief guest :

'Your greeting makes me very nervous ; in fact, the remembrance of the audience I had to face to-night made me very nervous during the day, when, suddenly, I took comfort from the thought that if I should break down in my attempt to address you, I had provided the best possible "under-study" in my young friend Mr. Ward, who not only could pick me up, but "take me off" so well, I am told, and on the best possible authority, that you would be unable to detect the difference ;* however, I hope I shall not have to call upon his good-natured imitation, for of whatever quality the stuff may be, no doubt you would prefer the original article. My position at the present moment is a proud one. I am proud of the generous compliment paid me by the committee of this club in allowing me the great privilege of entertaining you in this room, and I am indeed gratified to find myself surrounded by so many who rank from very dear friends to most valued acquaintances ; while from the walls around us we are looked down upon by the effigies of those whose names mean all that is famous in the past of our great theatrical history ; for I am bold enough to contend that from the days of the giant after whose immortal name this club is called, to those of my most distinguished guest, no country in the world can boast a prouder dramatic history than our own, and that no actors in the world have done more—taken from all time and for all in all—to uphold and adorn the beautiful art we follow than the actors of England. My words may sound egotistical, addressed as they are by an actor to actors, but such is not my wish ; and surely there must be proof of the truth of what I have ventured to say in the esteem in which gradually, and by hard and good work, our profession has been brought to be regarded. In the foremost ranks of those who have so worked must be placed the name of Henry Irving. When the idea first came to me to ask you to give me the honour of your company to wish Mr. Irving God-speed before he sails for America, it was with the thought that it would not perhaps be the least valued of the compliments that have been showered upon him to know that his comrades are among his best well-wishers. I would ask you to remember that, however high the position we may attain, or however humbly we

* An allusion to Mr. E. D. Ward's amusing imitation of me in a burlesque on *Fedora*, then being played at Toole's Theatre.

may remain in the ranks, the reflection of the great honour shown to Henry Irving last Wednesday by that wonderful representative gathering of the intellect of this land is shed upon our art and upon us, and that a share of its brightness belongs to the humblest amongst us. Although I will yield to none of you in my affection for him, I confess that it requires a sweeter voice, a more fluent tongue, than fall to my lot, to sing the praises of our friend ; but, fortunately for me, neither he nor his deeds are strangers to you, and a brief reminder will fill your hearts with all the good wishes I ask for him ; and I cannot but think it would sound fulsome, in such an assembly as this, were I to dwell at too great a length on his many claims to our regard and admiration. No one knows him as you do, none are fonder of him than we are, and none are prouder of his great success than we—his fellow-workers.'

In the course of the generous speech in which my old friend Hare, who sat on my left hand, proposed my health, he spoke words which touched me very much, and my vanity must bear the blame of their appearance here :

'It seems to me to have been a peculiarly fit and gracious thing that we should have been invited by the oldest and most successful manager in London to drink "bon voyage" and "God-speed" to its most distinguished and successful actor. To praise a man before his face is a somewhat delicate task ; but fortunately we all know Mr. Bancroft so well, and esteem him so highly, that he may well be spared any eulogies from me. His great ability as a manager is known to all, and it should never be forgotten that he was the first to originate and to introduce those reforms to which the dramatic profession owes so much of its present proud position ; although other managers have followed, and successfully followed, his lead, it should always be remembered that the lead was his. Those who have been fortunate enough to serve under his management—and there must be many such at this table—can testify to his unvarying kindness, his generosity, and his just dealings with all, and many of his most generous actions have been known only to the recipients of them. Perhaps not the least pleasing of Mr. Bancroft's reflections in the evening of his life, when we trust he may long enjoy the rest he deserves, and has worked for so well, will be that his long career as a manager has been one of probity and honour, that he has intentionally wronged no man, but that many owe much to him, and hold him in affectionate remembrance. As one of his oldest friends and fellow-workers, as one who passed ten happy years under his management, as his largest debtor for innumerable acts of kindness, I ask you to join me in heartily drinking "The health of Mr. Bancroft."'

Some able remarks in his own language were delightfully spoken by Pierre Berton, who represented the French stage, and a brilliant

impromptu speech was delivered by Mr. Lawrence Barrett, the distinguished American actor (who arrived in England, to my great pleasure, just in time to be present). This was unhappily lost, except upon the fortunate hearers, as the speaker did not make a single note, and all his efforts on the following day to recall his words were unavailing.

I will close my reference to this supper-party by anticipating events a little, and will relate a pleasant incident that happened late on a night in the following spring. My wife was on the staircase, on her way to her room, when we were startled by a loud knocking at the front door. The servants had locked up the house and, I thought, had gone to bed; but one of them had not, it seemed, for I heard the door-chain loosened, and in a moment more a well-known voice asked if I was at home or not. As I ran downstairs I called out to Mrs. Bancroft, 'Come down again; I am sure it's Irving.' He almost embraced me in the hall, and said, in the next breath, 'How white you've grown, old fellow!' He had only that evening returned from America, and took his chance of finding us at home. What a long delightful talk we had! and the clock struck often while we listened to his tale of travels and experiences.

Some requirements of the Metropolitan Board of Works, resulting doubtless from the burning of the Ring Theatre, in Vienna, and the more recent Alhambra catastrophe, having regard to the London theatres, with a view to better ensure the safety of the public in the event of fire, had to be complied with before a fixed date, which necessitated our breaking the run of *Fedora*. This was a misfortune, as the play had so firm a hold on public favour that fair weather or foul, heat or cold—and the thermometer often rules theatres with an iron will—made no difference in its attraction, and would otherwise have induced us to keep the theatre open through the summer, but, under the circumstances, we decided to leave town for a holiday at our usual time, giving up our parts, until the enforced date of closing in August, to Mr. Conway and Miss Calhoun, a clever young Californian actress, who had for some little time been a member of our company without having had the opportunity of an appearance. Mr. Coghlan, tempted by a large offer to revisit America, begged to be released from his engagement at the date of closing, and we agreed to his wish.

This year we respected the objection to *toujours perdrix*, and resolved to try new ground for our holiday. Reluctantly we forsook the Engadine, at any rate for a season. This was a good resolve, for even the miser who daily gloats over his hoard may chink his gold too often; then its sound grows so familiar that he loses some of the sweetness of its music.

We chose Homburg for the first part of our stay abroad, and were cheerfully lodged in the Untere Promenade. We only toyed with the Elizabeth Brunnen, and relied for renovation more upon

the good air and bright society, of which there was no lack. Sometimes in the early morning the crowd of health-seekers was very largely Park and Piccadilly in its character, for the list of water-drinkers would have done credit to any fashionable gathering honoured by Royalty downwards, and chronicled in the *Morning Post*.

We met and made no end of friends, and passed a pleasant 'cure.' My share of it was somewhat interfered with by a rash resolve to take up the part of Loris Ipanoff when we resumed the run of *Fedora*, as I had found some difficulty in otherwise replacing Coghlan.

During our stay the Prince of Wales, always among the most punctual at the favoured spring, took many opportunities to be gracious, and the late Duke and the Duchess of Albany honoured us one evening with an invitation to their villa, when Mrs. Bancroft added her signature to his Royal Highness's remarkable book of autographs, in which I had already had the honour to write my name on an occasion when I passed a day at Claremont, at the invitation of the Prince, from whom a few days afterwards I received this letter :

'Osborne, *April* 12, 1881.

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—Pray accept my best thanks for the photograph of Mrs. Bancroft, which I think excellent, also for your own as "Triplet." I shall value them very much. With kind regards to Mrs. Bancroft, believe me, yours very truly, LEOPOLD.'

There is no need to dwell upon the familiar routine of a German watering-place. The waters may be laden with iron or charged with salt ; the baths may be of pine, or perhaps of mud ; still the life is much the same : there is generally a strong family resemblance between the Schloss, the Kursaal, the band, and the constant evidence of the Kaiser's vast army. Whichever the Bad you choose, or is chosen for you, the stall-keepers seem ubiquitous, and to pursue their victims with their corals, their tortoise-shells, and their filigrees, no matter where they wander.

It was during this summer trip that we read with great regret of the sudden death of Mr. Dutton Cook, whom we regarded as one of the ablest, as he was certainly one of the most difficult to please, of all our dramatic critics. Personally, I have often worked my hardest to wring one line of praise from his cold but honest pen, and never felt more rewarded than when I earned it.

Feeling that our holiday would be incomplete without a peep at the mountains, we fixed on Zermatt for a short visit. Our journey there, after we left the Lake of Thun, was through a part of the country new to us, by Kandersteg, and over the Gemmi Pass, to the Baths of Leuk, where from a gallery you can see the patients bathing, many of whom pass the hours they are condemned to spend immersed in the mud playing chess, or drinking coffee :

thence down to the pestilential valley of the Rhone, where at almost every turn one meets the two Swiss horrors, the *goître* and the *crétin*.

Too tired to push on to the little inn at Stalden, we had to sleep in the depressing, though picturesque, village of Visp, starting gladly with early morning for our destination, and, on a perfect day, first saw the noble Matterhorn, which certainly, of all the giant Alpine peaks, should be called the monarch. As seen from the Hörnli and the Riffel, he is grander still, and remains graven upon the memory in all his dignity; seeming, as it were, to frown in triumph upon the graves in the little churchyard far below, where lie the bones of those who were of the party that first conquered him, but met death in their descent, as if in retribution for their presumption.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SEASON OF 1883-84.

Resumption of *Fedora*: Mr. Bancroft as Loris Ipanoff—A story of his eyeglass—Letter from Mrs. Langtry—Mr. Pinero's comedy, *Lords and Commons*—Its origin and production—'Behind the Scenes'—Resolution to retire from the cares of management—Revival of *Peril* and *A Lesson*—Sittings for a portrait to W. W. Ouless, R.A.—Death of the Duke of Albany—A letter of condolence—Deaths of Charles Reade and H. J. Byron—Reade's friendship—Anecdote of Byron, and characteristic letter from him—His impromptu jokes—His manner of writing his plays: an amusing incident—*The Rivals*—Pains taken in its production—The cast—The first night—A costly awning—The Engadine once more—A story of filial love—A fortnight at Brighton—Mr. and Mrs. Sala—Baron Huddleston: his story of a notorious criminal—The lady of the manor—Correspondence on the prospective retirement—Letters from F. C. Burnand, Wilkie Collins, W. S. Gilbert, John Hare, Lord Londesborough, W. W. Ouless, J. C. Parkinson, A. W. Pinero, B. C. Stephenson, Moy Thomas, and Edmund Yates.

THE alterations in the theatre were entirely confined to that part of it behind the curtain, and when we reached town, we found the stage still in the hands of the contractor, but the work, although completed by the fixed date, allowed me a few days only to rehearse my new part of Loris Ipanoff, to which I had been obliged to devote a large share of my time when abroad. This great disadvantage—lack of time—did not fully manifest itself until the opening night (September 29th), when I felt myself to be insufficiently rehearsed, and to a considerable extent unprepared to do justice to my intentions. My performance, so far as my own judgment upon it may be accepted, improved greatly in a few days; and not being, I hope, given to over-value my own work, I regard the third act, in which Loris relates at great length the story of his

wrongs, among the best of my efforts as an actor. The character, however, in the fourth act, to receive full justice, requires certain qualities of voice greater in power than are at my command. With the serious drawbacks also of having broken the run, and the loss of Mrs. Bancroft's services (which always militated like magic against the attractive powers of any play), we felt that *Fedora* could not be expected to regain its former fierce hold upon the public.

NOTE BY M. E. B.

There was some surmise, I remember, as to whether Mr. Bancroft would discard his eye-glass, he being very helpless without it. In his assumption of Loris Ipanoff, as in Triplet and several other characters, he, of course, did so, except at rehearsal, when it had to be used with double care in order to master the business of the scene; and I remember very old-fashioned glasses of the period being bought for Joseph Surface and other last century parts which, although carried out of sight, could have been used in the event of any emergency. This circumstance reminds me to tell briefly how, at one of Lady Hayter's delightful parties, we were treated to a hearty laugh at my husband's expense. On our arrival at the supper-table, Miss Melita Ponsonby (if she will forgive me for mentioning her name) laughingly remarked how completely *hors de combat* she felt, having lost her eye-glass on her way from one party to another that evening. She was quite unable to recognise her friends in the room, or to distinguish one thing from another on the table. Miss Ponsonby was so plainly at a loss to know what to do, that Mr. Bancroft offered to assist her to some refreshment, and she thanked him. My husband immediately adjusted his eye-glass, and began to look about for something. Miss Ponsonby laughingly remarked, 'Ah, your glass would be no use to me; I am more blind than you, Mr. Bancroft!' Upon which he replied, 'Then you must be blind indeed, Miss Ponsonby.' She then asked permission to try his glass, and found, to her great delight, that it suited her sight exactly; for she was able to look about the room, to distinguish her friends, and to walk round the table to choose for herself. Mr. Bancroft's eye-glass is always firmly fastened to his collar-stud, and cannot be removed without some difficulty. His ludicrous attitude, consequently, may well be imagined when I say that wherever Miss Ponsonby went, Mr. Bancroft was of necessity compelled to follow, for she, unexpectedly finding a glass through which she could see so clearly, was naturally not inclined to let the prize go in a hurry. So away Miss Ponsonby went, followed everywhere by Mr. Bancroft, attached by a short string which he vainly attempted to detach. It had the funniest effect possible, for whenever Miss Ponsonby stopped suddenly to see what she would like to select, down went my husband's face too, and his serious expression of countenance made us laugh all the more. This eye-glass of Mr. Bancroft's

has often been the cause of good fun to me, and a blessing to the caricaturists.

We had the pleasure this autumn to renew our friendly relations with Mrs. Langtry, who had passed a long time in the United States, and was returning there with the intention to act *Peril*, there called *A Wife's Peril*, as its own title was claimed by an American author. The following letter will explain a small share we had in the matter:

'120, West Thirteenth Street, New York, *October* 28, 1883.

'MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,—Many, *many* thanks for your kindness in letting me have your prompt-book of *Peril*; I appreciate the gift, and thank you heartily for your generosity. I was dreadfully worried all the way across, not knowing how I should manage without it, for I know how much the success of *Peril* was due to the perfect stage-management.

'I have been overworking myself, rehearsing from ten till ten every day, and am feeling the effects. I wish I could take things a little more easily, but the love of acting grows upon me, and I think of absolutely nothing else.

'I shall never forget your and "Mrs. B.'s" kindness in giving me my first engagement, for I feel that my subsequent success was owing in a very great degree to the position you gave me. I am writing what I feel.

* * * * * *

'I must tell you again how grateful I am to you for the prompt-book, and if the piece succeeds, I shall attribute it to you.—Yours very truly, LILLIE LANGTRY.'

Fedora only served the purpose of drawing fairly good houses RESUMED until we prepared Mr. Pinero's comedy, to which he BY S. B. B. had given the attractive title *Lords and Commons*. How this play came about may be worth the telling. One day, on my way from Paris by the tidal train, on board the boat I met Henry Russell, the still hale and hearty composer of 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer,' 'The Ivy Green,' 'The Land of the West,' and scores of other well-known songs. Mr. Russell, who has lived for years at Boulogne, where he is as well known as the *préfet* himself, told me he had just finished reading a novel which had pleased him very much, and in which he thought were the germs of a good play. Very kindly he afterwards sent us the book, which we found to be a rather crude translation of a clever Swedish romance. We told the plot to Mr. Pinero, who thought he saw in it the starting-point for his work, and although his play owed a little in incident to its story, it was only in outline and suggestion.

The author read and rehearsed his play with great skill, giving all concerned a clear insight into the value of his characters: an art rarely possessed in the highest degree, in my experience, but by

author-actors, as, for instance, Dion Boucicault and T. W. Robertson (who was for some time an actor, although never a prominent one). This faculty is shared, doubtless owing to a long-since-acquired intimate acquaintance with the stage, by W. S. Gilbert. H. J. Byron, strange to say, was devoid of the power; on the other hand, so far as our experience goes, it is distinctly owned by F. C. Burnand, who acted a good deal *en amateur*. Was he not, indeed, the founder of the A. D. C. at Cambridge?

Lords and Commons allowed us the great pleasure of again numbering Mrs. Stirling among the members of our company, to which Mr. Forbes-Robertson also returned, to remain prominently connected with us until the close of our management.

The author diligently directed the rehearsals, and no pains were spared by all concerned to bring his work successfully through its ordeal. As for *décor*, perhaps stage illusion went as far as need be in the old hall and the terrace, which were perfect specimens of Mr. Telbin's art, while the tapestry-room was made very complete by Mr. Walter Johnstone. Caryl Court, both in its decay and renovation, was a splendid specimen of an old English mansion.

The construction of the play was full of talent and ingenuity, the types of characters most original (although in some cases drawn, perhaps, with too strong a leaning towards the meaner side of our poor humanity), and much of the dialogue showed the highest excellence; but, unfortunately, the sympathy of the audience early in the story was forfeited by the aristocrats, and, once lost, it was difficult to restore it to them, in spite of the pathetic beauty of the closing scene, which was treated with exceptional skill by Forbes-Robertson.

On Saturday, November 24, 1883, *will be played, for the first time,*

LORDS AND COMMONS:

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY, IN FOUR ACTS, WRITTEN BY A. W. PINERO.

The scene is laid at Caryl Court, near Ottway, St. Anne, in the spring and summer of the present time.

EARL OF CARYL	MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON.
LORD PERCY LEWISCOURT	MR. C. BROOKFIELD.
SIR GEORGE PARNACOTT, M.D.	MR. ELLIOT.
TOM JERVOISE	MR. BANCROFT.
MR. SMEE	MR. ALFRED BISHOP.
MR. CHAD	MR. GIRARDOT.
MR. TREDGER	MR. ALBERT SIMS.
PRESSENGER	MR. PERCY VERNON.
BABY RADBONE	MR. STEWART DAWSON.
COUNTESS OF CARYL	MRS. STIRLING.
LADY NELL	MISS CALHOUN.
MRS. DEVENISH	MRS. BERNARD-BEERE.
MISS MAPLEBECK	MRS. BANCROFT.

Tradespeople, men and women-servants.

The author referred the critics and the public to *Manner af Börs*, a Swedish romance by Maria Sophia Schwartz, the perusal of which suggested the argument of his play.

Because the play, which was acted for nearly eighty nights, only attracted full houses for the first few weeks of its performance, it was referred to after its withdrawal as having been a failure, and resulting in a loss. This impression was quite erroneous, for without pretending to rank as a great success, the career of the play was by no means without profit to author and manager. Unfortunately in fame to either it did not answer early hopes, partly owing, it may be, to the high standard of all-round completeness the press and the public had, fairly enough, grown to expect from us—a compliment, however gratifying as a sort of medal awarded for general excellence, by no means without its reverse side. In Mrs. Bancroft's words :

'It would be very interesting to an audience to be given now and then a peep behind the scenes, or in the green-room ; they would often see what good servants to the public are the actors ; how often, when suffering acute pain, they have gone through their work so bravely that the audience has not detected even a look of it. The public owe more to the actor than they will perhaps be prepared to admit. I have known that grand old actress Mrs. Stirling, when suffering from a severe attack of bronchitis, to go to the theatre in all weathers and at great risk, more especially at her age, and when she ought to have been in bed. I have seen her arrive scarcely able to breathe, but insisting upon going through her duties ; this has often been an anxiety, for while admiring her courage, I have feared bad results from it. Mrs. Stirling's sight being impaired, she always dreaded stairs ; and, unfortunately for her, in the hall of Caryl Court there was a long gallery and then a tall flight of steps leading from it to the stage, while behind the scenes there was another flight to reach this gallery. Luckily she did not enter alone, but had the kindly help of Miss Eleanor Calhoun, who played her daughter in the piece. When Mrs. Stirling was ill, these stairs would naturally be a double anxiety, but she would listen to no change of entrance in the scene which might affect the arrangement of the play, and I often felt anxious about her. One would imagine, to see her slowly and cautiously ascend the flight of steps, stopping every now and then to murmur, "Oh, these stairs !" that she would scarcely be able to get through her part ; but although she has stood gasping for breath and terribly ailing, the moment her cue came to go on the stage she seemed to become twenty years younger : vigour returned to her limbs, and she walked with such a firm and stately gait that the change was extraordinary. Her grand voice was alone worth a good walk to listen to, and her acting of the part was as no one else *could* act it.

'This allusion to *Lords and Commons* reminds me of Mr. Brook-

field's remarkable "make-up" for Lord Percy Lewiscourt, which was so complete a disguise that when he first entered the green-room I could not for a time imagine who he could be. It was a most wonderful metamorphosis, and his acting of the part added to the list of his numerous clever impersonations.'

We now approach a crisis in our management: the moment when we came to the resolve to retire altogether from its cares. This happened towards the end of 1883. Our impulse was doubtless somewhat hastened by the result of our two last seasons of unthought-of success, and, indeed, by the almost unbroken full tide of prosperity which had followed our perilous removal, achieved, as it had been so often and to our regret, with old material. After dwelling anxiously on the subject in all its important bearings—we even went so far as to fix the date of the realization of our wish, thinking the end of twenty years' management, then some eighteen months distant, would be a fair climax to set upon our labours. But we kept these thoughts at first to ourselves until we felt assured they were not transient. Only those closely connected with the entire control of a popular and successful theatre can know the mental and bodily strain it means, and they alone can count the cost, in wear and tear, which buys its prizes. In considering our decision, the exceptional fact must not be lost sight of that we first held the reins of management at a time of life very early to assume responsibility. Perhaps the date when this determination was made public will be a better moment to give more fully the pros and cons, the whys and wherefores, that governed our resolve.

Although some people were much in love with the play, the attractive powers of *Lords and Commons* waned sooner than we expected, so we revived *Peril*, which had not been acted since its career of great success at the Prince of Wales's Theatre seven years before. Mr. Burnand's clever *Lesson*, given by the actress to the amateur, was played in conjunction with the more important piece. This programme was a stop-gap while the preparations were completed for a contemplated production of *The Rivals*. As I resigned my original part of Sir George Ormond to Mr. Forbes-Robertson, and appeared for the first time as the moving spirit of the play, the sharp-witted doctor, the cast of *Peril* on February 16, 1884, was entirely new, being as follows: Sir George Ormond, Bart., Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Sir Woodbine Grafton, K.C.S.I., Mr. Alfred Bishop; Captain Bradford, Mr. H. B. Conway; Dr. Thornton, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Crossley Beck, Mr. C. Brookfield; Percy Grafton, Mr. H. Eversfield; Meadows, Mr. Percy Vernon; Kemp, Mr. Elliot; Lady Ormond, Mrs. Bernard-Beere; Lucy Ormond, Miss Julia Gwynne; Mrs. Crossley Beck, Mrs. Canninge; Sophie, Miss Augusta Wilton.

On this occasion Mrs. Bancroft was again supported in *A Lesson* by Mr. Brookfield in his admirable character-sketch of the old

Scotch knight, and by Miss Calhoun and Mr. Forbes-Robertson in the other parts.

It was during the spring of this year that the chief sittings were given for a portrait Mr. Ouless, R.A., painted of me, and which a little later was shown in the exhibition of the Royal Academy. I look back to the pleasant hours passed in the studio, and many delightful talks while the work progressed, as the commencement of a friendship I highly prize.

Before our account of *The Rivals*, we will tell of events which happened while the play was in preparation, for the King of Terrors was busy with his remorseless scythe. In March came the sad and startling news of the Duke of Albany's sudden death at Cannes. The lessees of the London theatres were informed by the Lord Chamberlain that they were at liberty to exercise their discretion with regard to closing their doors on the night of his Royal Highness's funeral, and by common consent the managers decided to mark their respect for the lamented Prince's memory by suspending all performances. A letter of condolence was addressed to the Prince of Wales by representative leading actors then in London. Mr. Irving was in America, and it fell to my lot, as the senior manager, to forward the document to Mr. (now Sir) Francis Knollys, which was most graciously and cordially acknowledged by his Royal Highness.

In the following month, and, if I remember rightly, on the same day (Good Friday), two distinguished dramatists, whose names have often graced these pages, passed away—Charles Reade and Henry James Byron ; the former in his seventieth year, the latter in the prime of life, he being only fifty.

Reade, whose world-wide fame as a novelist and man of letters entitles his name to be enrolled among the literary giants of the age, had long been suffering, and for years had been a martyr to asthma and bronchitis. He was brought home, after a fruitless search for better health on the shores of the Mediterranean, only in time to die in his native land, where his memory will long be honoured. The recollection of his friendship, which we enjoyed for twelve years, and of his many kind and gentle acts, we shall always treasure.

Our pleasure that this feeling was reciprocal may be best imagined when we read, in the 'Life of Charles Reade,' these words :

'Below a very natural and sweet letter of hers, ending with a cordial "God bless you!" Charles Reade has inscribed these words : "Mrs. Bancroft (Marie Wilton), a gifted and amiable artist, who in this letter makes too much of my friendship, which both she and her husband had so richly earned by their kindness and courtesy to me."'

Poor Byron, who, it may not generally be known, was of the same lineage as the immortal poet, as a reference to Lodge or

Burke will show, and, as one may have imagined his great relative to have been, was a Bohemian to the core. Talking one day at dinner of his distinguished ancestor, when eating heartily of turkey, he said, 'I'm quite ashamed, but I must have some more of that bird.' Mrs. Byron, as he was assisted, remarked, 'My dear Harry, really you'll be ill; how greedy you are!' He laughed, and replied, 'It's all in honour of the family motto, "*Greedy* (*crede*) *Byron*!"'

During his long career as a dramatic author, which must have spread over a period approaching thirty years, Byron wrote more than a hundred plays and burlesques, in not one of which can be found a single line that the purest-minded person might not have listened to. In his very early days Byron had also been an actor, Tom Robertson, Fred Younge, and he, once being members of the same company. Later in his life he went upon the stage again, but then only played characters written by himself. His health had long been failing, and it was for some time plainly evident to the few friends he cared to keep about him that his race was nearly run. He grew dreadfully restless, and was constantly changing his home, generally having at least a couple of empty houses on his hands. Within quite a short period we have correspondence dated by him from Eccleston Square, Bedford Square, Clapham Park, and Sutton. One characteristic letter from him will be well placed here:

'Langton Lodge, Sutton, Surrey, *June* 25, 1882.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—I ought to have answered your very kind letter before, but upon my word the weather has been so depressing that I have had no "go" in me, and have not taken up a pen, except under protest and on compulsion, for a month. If the sun would only show up like a man, I should feel like another one, but constant clouds and almost ceaseless winds drive one wretched. Good for the theatres, though. You will both soon enjoy what the papers always madden me by calling a "well-deserved" or "well-earned" holiday, and will, I suppose, seek the Engadine again.

'I hope Mrs. Bancroft has escaped her quondam enemy, hay-fever, this year; I always think of her when passing the carts full of it—hay, not fever.

'I have a lot of work on hand, with a most horrible and revolting distaste for doing it, and the very name of a playhouse drives me frantic. A boy came and left a bill announcing Collette as the *Colonel* at the Public Hall here last week. It is lucky I didn't catch him; but the Sutton boys are very agile. I like Collette, and I like the *Colonel*, but there *are* limits. Arthur Sketchley has been here for two or three days. He left yesterday, but the staircase still trembles.* And now, hoping you may both enjoy your rest, and with kindest regards, believe me, yours always sincerely, H. J. BYRON.'

* Of course, in allusion to Sketchley's enormous bulk and weight.

Poor dear Byron! How handsome he once was! How the hours seemed to fly in his companionship! His very name meant fun. Perhaps no writer ever had a greater power in twisting his language into puns, while his intense appreciation of another's joke was delightful to see.

It would be easy to fill pages with his witticisms; but, without wearying the reader, we both feel compelled to recall one or two of his impromptu jokes.

It was at the little Prince of Wales's Theatre that he first suggested his Shakespearian motto for the box-book keeper, 'So much for *Booking 'em!*' which afterwards was sent to *Punch*. There was a carpenter in the theatre, by name Cressy, who was such a particularly quiet, steady man, that it was remarked by several members of the company, who were speaking of him in the green-room, when someone said he understood that Cressy at one time had been a drinker, but that he had *taken the pledge* years ago, and became a changed man. Byron observed, 'Yes, now he is *Water-Cressy*.'

When his play *Dearer than Life* was produced at the Queen's Theatre, in Long Acre, all had gone well with it until the end of the second act, after which there was a very long delay. The audience grew more and more impatient, the band played waltz after waltz, still the curtain was not taken up. Byron was walking uneasily up and down the corridor at the back of the dress circle, chafing over the mishap, and tugging, as he always did when agitated, at one side of his moustache, when a friendly critic, almost as anxious as himself, came up to him, and said, 'What, in the name of goodness, are they doing?' 'I don't know,' moaned Byron.

At this moment the distinct sound of a saw, hard at work behind the scenes, was heard above the uproar: *saw—saw—saw!* 'What are they doing now, my dear Byron?' 'I think they must be *cutting out the last act!*'

At the time of his disastrous management of the three theatres in Liverpool, an intimate London friend, who met him suddenly in the street, was much struck with his anxious look and altered appearance, and asked sympathetically, 'What's the matter, old fellow—*liver?*' 'Yes,' said Byron languidly, '*Liverpool!*'

The friend couldn't help laughing heartily, but went on, 'Really, now, do take some advice; you've grown so thin. Have you tried cod-liver oil?' Byron replied, 'No; but I've tried Theatre *Royal!*'

Two of his jokes, which must have been among the last he ever uttered, no doubt found their way into print, but even at this risk we will venture to tell them here.

One day, at Clapham, where he died, he received a letter from his coachman, who was at the Bedford Square house, about a sick horse. Byron told a friend of the circumstance in this way:

'They won't let me alone even down here; they will worry me about trifles. This morning my fool of a coachman wrote to tell

me that a horse was ill, and wanted to know if he might *give him a ball*. I answered, "Oh, yes, if you like, give him *a ball*; but *don't ask too many people!*"' Then adding, through his laughter, 'I don't suppose the fellow will understand it.'

Still later on, he said, 'People are very kind to me. I had no idea so many friends remembered me. I thought myself much more forgotten. Lovely flowers and delicious fruit are brought so often; and game, and other things. Last week a dear old friend sent me a hare. I never saw such an animal; the biggest *hare* that ever ran, I think. I really fancied *Kendal* must be inside it!' (in allusion to the partnership management of the St. James's Theatre by Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal).

NOTE BY M. E. B.

Byron's was a happy-go-lucky nature; everything was sure to be right, because he wished it. He was the epitome of good nature; the most charming companion in the world, often keeping everyone about him in fits of laughter, when it was most amusing to see him laugh till he cried at his own jokes, and his laughter was so infectious that, no matter what humour one was in, a grave countenance was impossible. He would always write best under pressure. If too much time were given him his work would drag lazily along, and before he had half finished it he would be weary of the subject and want to start on something else.

I well remember his saying to me, 'I have taken a positive dislike to ——,' naming a character in the play. 'I won't have anything more to say to him. I made his acquaintance six weeks ago, and I am tired to death of him and his long speeches. He is a poor spirited brute, and he must be locked up; if I meet him again I shall cut him. So will the actor who plays him. So will the critics who see him.' The late Mrs. Byron has often amused me with accounts of how her husband would (when pressed for time) write his plays. If walking with him he would suddenly, as an idea struck him, stop, and on the back of an envelope, leaning against a wall or maybe a house-door, submit it at once to paper for fear of forgetting it. She was always glad when a play was finished, for while it was being written nothing else was talked about. In the middle of a conversation he would rush to his desk to jot down a thought which had just occurred to him. *Wrinkles* would, I am convinced, have been a better play if less time had been given him to write it.

On an occasion when he complained of a cold, and was asked how he caught it, he said that while taking his morning ablution such a capital idea suggested itself to him that he jumped out of his bath to write it down at once.

In a hurried and most earnest manner he, one day, was jotting down an important inspiration, leaning heavily against the hall-door of a house in the neighbourhood of Doughty Street, where he

lived, when suddenly it was opened by an elderly lady, who was coming out. Byron fell into the hall, upsetting the lady, who in alarm screamed loudly. The situation must have been very ludicrous, for Byron laughed to such a degree that he couldn't get up, while Mrs. Byron stood on the doorstep trying to explain and apologize ; but the lady, when she recovered herself sufficiently to speak at all, exclaimed, 'Take him away, ma'am, to some asylum !' The more Byron tried to apologize the less able he became to do so, for the sight of the elderly lady, with her bonnet on one side, her bag and umbrella on the mat, and her eyes starting from her head with fright, sent him off into a kind of hysterics. He laughed so much when he told us of this that it was with difficulty we followed the story. We only regretted that he could not introduce the scene into a play ; but he said it would be hard on the Christmas clowns.

He was laid at rest in Brompton Cemetery. Peace be with thy remains, my old friend.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

We had often contemplated, among other notions (which included Shakespeare's comedy, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, always to be thrown aside for the want of a Falstaff), a picturesque and historical production of *The Rivals*, when an opportunity offered itself, and had bestowed some work and much thought upon a re-arrangement and transition of certain scenes to prevent the frequent change so common and often so unnecessary in the days of Sheridan, and to allow of the intended elaborate picture of old Bath.

To better carry out these plans we sought the aid of Mr. Pinero, who became partly responsible for the version presented of the standard comedy. Mr. Telbin went down to the famous old city to seek authorities and make sketches for his beautiful opening scene, in which so much last-century detail was shown. We must have tried the patience of those kind friends in the reading-room of the British Museum, who cheerfully devoted considerable time towards helping our researches to learn all we could of the fashionable resort of our forefathers—the Carlsbad and Kissingen of their day. We found a mine of information to govern the work of our other scenic artists, and to aid us in producing the play.

The gavotte we introduced in the 'Tea-room' leading from the pump-room, where hung the authenticated portrait of the city's former king, Beau Nash, was the result of some pains, and the designs for the historically correct and beautiful dresses were made by Mr. Forbes-Robertson.

As regards the distribution of the famous well-known characters in the comedy, it may be there were instances of square pegs in round holes. One of the original notions was a personation of Mrs. Malaprop on novel lines by Mrs. Bancroft, but early rehearsals led us to fear that the experiment would have been at least dangerous, and the idea was abandoned. We decided instead

to give the public the certainty of Mrs. Stirling's splendid performance, and also engaged our old friend, Lionel Brough, to repeat his well-known version of the valiant Bob Acres. Mr. Pinero, who had a fancy for the part, undertook the responsibility of Sir Anthony Absolute, the other characters being acted by members of the company as it stood. Influenced perhaps by the remembrance in very early stage days of Leigh Murray's estimate of the thankless part of Faulkland, when he told me that he preferred it to that of Captain Absolute (a choice, I admit, I cannot understand), I resolved to try and force his comically jealous nature into more prominence than it sometimes receives, especially as my playing a minor part enabled us to persuade Mrs. Bernard-Beere to accept the equally thankless task of treating the companion character of the mawkish Julia in the same way. I venture to think that we met with some reward at the hands of the critical.

Perhaps this is the best place to insert an extract from the bill of the play for Saturday, May 3rd, 1884, before finishing my notes on this costly revival :

'In submitting this performance of Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*, for public approval, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft are actuated by the same desire which guided their revival of the *School for Scandal* —a desire to heighten the effect of the author's play without encumbering its action. While strictly preserving the text, it has been found possible, by means of a few transpositions in the dialogue and some variation of locality, to avoid shifting the scenes in view of the audience.

'For this arrangement of the comedy, Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Pinero are jointly responsible. Characters : Sir Anthony Absolute, Mr. A. W. Pinero ; Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Mr. Alfred Bishop ; Captain Absolute, Mr. Forbes-Robertson ; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Bancroft ; Bob Acres, Mr. Lionel Brough ; David, Mr. C. Brookfield ; Fag, Mr. Elliot ; Thomas, Mr. Percy Vernon ; Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. Stirling ; Julia Melville, Mrs. Bernard-Beere ; Lydia Languish, Miss Calhoun ; Lucy, Miss Julia Gwynne.'

I was conscious from the rising of the curtain that a certain hostile feeling reigned in parts of the house ; but did not expect, when I first appeared in the play, and paid my visit to Jack Absolute in the picturesque old inn, where 'Ensign Beverley' was lodged in our re-arrangement of the scenery, to be received with the hooting and hisses that saluted me from a persistent few, and which the mingled cheers and applause of the main audience failed to drown. I remained for some time, apparently unmoved, before the confused uproar abated, and until the performance was over failed to know its reason. I then learnt that it was a resentment, by a few noisy occupants of the upper circle, of a wetting through a sudden shower, which in truth hastened the opening of the doors

before the appointed hour, the malcontents being under the impression, I was told, that the attendants were late in their duty.

A letter I wrote to the newspapers on the subject will perhaps better explain the circumstance, and another incident, indirectly connected with it, which I did not refer to at the time of its occurrence :

'I learn from my correspondence of this morning that the antagonistic reception given to me by a few among the audience at the Haymarket Theatre on Saturday evening had nothing to do with the performance of *The Rivals*, nor was it a revival of the old pit grievance, but the result of an angry feeling caused by the unpleasant effect of a hailstorm which occurred, unfortunately, just before the doors were opened, the cries raised against me when I went upon the stage being for shelter outside the theatre.

'In the autumn of 1882, at the wish of Mrs. Bancroft, I erected, at the entrances to the second circle and the gallery of the Haymarket Theatre, two large awnings for use in wet and threatening weather. They were for some time successfully used. On an afternoon in December, 1882, while the awning to the second circle was being put up, one of my servants had the misfortune to let an iron bar fall on the hat of a passer-by. A heavy claim for damages was soon after brought against me. The event was, to avoid adding litigation to other anxieties of theatrical management, that I compromised the matter at a cost of £600. I then did my utmost to get consent for the supports of the awnings to remain permanent fixtures, but this was objected to, so I decided to abolish them altogether, not being anxious for a repetition of the catastrophe.

'If you will publish this letter, it will be a kindness to allow me the opportunity of offering some proof that I have not been unmindful of the comfort of every section of the public who visit the theatre which I have the honour to direct.'

I am inclined to regard the old comedy as a bad selection for elaborate illustration. Its plot and incidents are too disjointed and fragile to bear such detailed treatment as harmonized perfectly with the author's great companion work, the *School for Scandal*.

The full houses the revival attracted for a few weeks sufficed to more than recoup the large outlay on its production ; but the performance never laid a firm hold upon the public, and the play had but a languid existence afterwards.

This season was the least successful we knew at the Haymarket Theatre, as throughout its duration we did not achieve any marked attraction, greatly owing to the small part Mrs. Bancroft had taken in the performances, her appearances being limited to a secondary character in *Lords and Commons* and the revival of *A Lesson*. It may be interesting to state, however, that the result, in spite of

these drawbacks, would have ranked as an average season in the old days at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. At its close we resolved upon a long holiday, to allow full reflection before publicly announcing so important a decision as our intended retirement from management.

After playing truant in the previous year, we returned again to the Engadine ; and as this will be the last mention we shall make in this book of Pontresina, let me tell a little tale of filial love we learnt there. For five-and-twenty years Madame Leupold, who was a brilliant pianist, and for some time gave lessons to the daughters of the Prince and Princess of Wales, had visited the little village with her son Hugo. Always delicate, she had long been a sufferer, and became a martyr to sleeplessness and neuralgic pain ; noise and crowds grew gradually more trying as the power of sleep grew less with her ; and, although she stayed in the quietest inn, even its share of bustle became unbearable. At last she took up her summer quarters in a humble cottage which belonged to the friendly innkeeper. On a grassy slope above was a favoured spot where, when well enough, the little lady would sit for hours, under the shade of a tent-umbrella, attended by the devoted son, who had abandoned his profession, and sacrificed his chances in the race of life, to stay by her side. In the year before they arrived together to spend the summer in the same peaceful way, and as towards evening they reached their destination, the mother's eyes sought her favourite resting-place ; she saw to her amazement and regret that a *châlet* had been built upon the nook she knew so well. Horrified, she turned to her son, and exclaimed that Pontresina would never be the same to her again. He consoled her, saying that to-morrow they would seek another corner, and soon prevailed upon her to rest quietly till then. In the morning Hugo went to his mother with the news that he knew all about the little *châlet*—that the owner had not yet taken possession, and that he had the key to show her over it, if she would go with him. With difficulty the son coaxed a reluctant consent from his mother, and tenderly he helped her up the new-made path. Arrived at the porch, he unlocked the door, and they both entered. The invalid's delight and admiration were unbounded at the charming little rooms, with their lovely views, the tiny kitchen, the open piano, and every detail of pretty furniture. All was complete—nothing was wanting but a master. 'Oh, Hugo, what a little paradise ! How quickly it has all been finished ; what taste, what comfort ! But we must not envy ; you say you know who has done all this—tell me who the owner of it is.' He kissed her and said, '*You, mother dear.*'

Silently, with the aid of good friends in the village, had Hugo carried out the building and furnishing of this fairy home, and in his own quiet way he had acted his little play.

Madame Leupold was only spared a few years' enjoyment of her

mountain home ; her health faded slowly, and not long afterwards she passed quietly away. Her remains lie in a corner of the little village churchyard, where they were borne by the guides through the deep winter snow, and followed by the peasants and the school-children, who chanted by her simple grave the hymns they learnt from her.

Our long holiday ended in a pleasant fortnight spent at Brighton, where we were happy, as either hosts or guests, in an interchange of dinners with Baron and Lady Diana Huddleston, the Yates's, the Salas, the Rev. Henry White, Edward Dicey, J. C. Parkinson, and other friends. This was the last we ever saw of Mrs. Sala, a true woman, to know whom meant to esteem and admire her many beautiful qualities. Shortly afterwards she sailed for Australia with her husband, from which country she was destined never to return.

In a letter received from Mr. Sala, bearing date 'Monday, 13th October, 1884,' and which is a beautiful specimen of his marvellous handwriting, are these words :

'I have written this on the back of a slip of "copy" which has served its turn. In the event of my returning from the Antipodes as "a grand pianoforte," this scribble may serve as a memento of yours very faithfully, GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.'

At one of these pleasant dinners, Baron Huddleston, who is well and widely known as a *raconteur* with a never-ending budget of professional and other experiences, told a remarkable story of a notorious criminal, whose skill must have been worthy of *Jim the Penman*, which greatly struck us at the time, and vividly recalled the name and fame of our old friend, Wilkie Collins, who would have revelled in its strange details : indeed, it might perhaps have added to the many phantoms he once told us often followed him up the staircase as he went to bed, after writing very late. So far as we are able, we will repeat the anecdote in Baron Huddleston's own words.

In the year 1844, not very long after the now 'Last of the Barons' was called to the bar, a man named Bowen was tried for destroying and defacing a register of baptisms, marriages, and burials. He had, it transpired, devoted himself for years to getting up and, as it now seemed, to manufacturing pedigrees. He was desirous of making out a link which was wanting in the title to some property, and he conceived the notion of forging an entry in an old will to effect his object. For this purpose he went to Oxford, and there applied to see the wills of a certain date, for in those days, strange to say, wills were kept in old wine-hampers in the Bodleian Library. The custodian produced a roll of wills of the particular year inquired for, and, while his attention was cleverly diverted for a moment, the man Bowen abstracted one will from the roll without detection. He took it away, and then, by means of a cunning chemical preparation, removed a passage in the will, and inserted

in its place, in handwriting which marvellously imitated that in which the body of the will was written, a description that was essential to support the link in the chain he was forging. Having done this, he paid a second visit to the Bodleian Library, when he again procured the roll of the year wanted, and replaced in it the will which he had so cleverly altered. The roll was subsequently put back into its original repository without its unsuspecting guardian perceiving what had been done. The next step was to apply in due form for a copy of that particular will, and the clerk to the proper officer prepared in the ordinary way to make it for him ; but while engaged in his work he went away to dinner, leaving the copy and the original will open on his desk. During his absence a strong mid-day sun, playing through the window of the office upon the will, brought out the original handwriting, which had been temporarily defaced, and the clerk on his return found, to his amazement, passages in the will which certainly had not been there when he was making the copy before he went to dinner.

This of course, excited immediate suspicion, and the authorities were on the look-out for the man's return when he should come for the copy he had ordered. The curator had some difficulty in bringing to his mind the face of the scoundrel, but he perfectly well recollected that he had in his possession a remarkable-looking carpet-bag, from which he had taken some papers. In the meantime, to further carry out and complete his villainous plan, it became necessary to remove the original evidence of the entry which he had destroyed, and for this purpose Bowen went to Pirton Church, in Worcestershire, where, in the parish register of marriages, etc., was the entry which he wanted to remove.

He got the curate to show him the register, and then, feigning illness, while the clergyman went to fetch a glass of water for him, he tore out the entry. The curate, as he moved away, fortunately heard the tearing of the paper, and suspecting foul play, turned back just in time to discover what had been done. He cleverly detained the man while the police were sent tor. When Bowen was apprehended, and the proofs of his guilt made apparent, he had in his possession at the time the identical carpet-bag which had engaged the attention of the custodian at Oxford, and in it were found pieces of old faded parchment, a small stock of chemical preparations, various coloured inks, pens, etc. Bowen was tried for this offence and convicted before Lord Chief Justice Tindal, and although a point of law was argued before the fifteen judges the conviction was affirmed, and he was sentenced to seven years' transportation.

NOTE BY M. E. B.

There could not be more kindly host and hostess than Baron and Lady Diana Huddleston, whose devotion to her husband, and never-wearying care during his recent serious attacks of illness, cannot fail to excite the admiration of all who

have the privilege of their acquaintance. I own to a great affection for 'Lady Di,' and value her friendship very highly. During a delightful visit to their pretty, cosy, comfortable 'Grange' at Ascot, and while walking through the well-kept grounds, an unexpected amusement presented itself, for we heard the sound of a brass band, which seemed quite close. Presently the Baron came along hurriedly, and told us that the band of the Bisley Farm School (I think it was so called), which is composed of poor boys who are boarded, lodged, taught music, and to play various instruments, were performing selections in the neighbourhood. Would we like them to be invited into the grounds, that we might hear them? We were delighted with the idea, and by-and-by in they all marched, headed by their leader and instructor. Meanwhile Lady Diana and my husband had seated themselves in a tiny arbour, so that the boys, not seeing her ladyship take any active part in their reception, concluded that I, who, accompanied by the Baron, met them as they came along, must be their hostess. They played some well-known airs, ably led by their conductor, in a remarkable manner for boys so young. One little fellow amused me particularly; I think he must have had a troublesome cold in his head, for there was a crystal tear at the tip of his nose which remained stationary. No exertion over his clarionet, even when playing *forte*, seemed to disturb its position. This attracted my attention, and I could not help speculating as to its ultimate destination.

When the boys had finished their selection, I made a speech to them, in which I reminded them 'how much they were indebted to the friendly and charitable society which had taken such pains to teach them music, thereby providing them with a source of livelihood in the future, and that I hoped they would never cease to be grateful to their benefactors.' They were all affected by the address, especially the blower of the clarionet, who, being on the point of crying, much imperilled the hitherto firm steadiness of the crystal appendage. My limited audience consisted of the Baron, who stood by me thoroughly enjoying the whole performance, Lady Diana and my husband, who were sitting a little further off, laughing heartily. When I came to the end of my speech I bade them play 'God save the Queen.' There was a slight difference of opinion amongst the instruments, but on the whole they got through the anthem very satisfactorily. When this was over I called for 'three cheers for the Queen;' the little fellows shouted with all their hearts and lungs. Then I said 'one more,' to which they responded with the same spirit. 'One more,' I cried, and just as they were about to break forth again louder than ever, I continued, '*for me*.' They were amused and delighted, and gave me a very warm and hearty cheer, but the effort of shouting had evidently alarmed and disturbed the crystal tear; it had disappeared, but *where* it travelled, far or near, I never ascertained. After this ceremony the Baron and I marched the little musicians into the house

to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne,' and as I had never seen them before, I thought the air so appropriate! In a long room, tea, cakes, bread and butter, jam, and all sorts of good things had been ordered by the Baron and Lady Diana, and prepared at short notice by their kindly cook. After a splendid tea, and a good look at the birds and animals which the Baron and Lady Diana love to have about them, the boys left the Grange, delighted with their visit, and fully convinced, I am sure, that I was the 'lady of the manor.'

FURTHER NOTES BY AND TO S. B. B.

We had now ample time for reflection, and did not swerve from our intention to abandon management at the close of one more season, and to limit our subsequent responsibilities, with regard to our art, to occasional appearances as actors only. Many of our arguments were doubtless commonplace enough, as to some extent they must be in weighing any such decision. Running uphill is a delightful game, especially if you are so fortunate as to succeed in even sighting the top; but one false step there may hurl you quickly down again!

To our near friends, and to those whom we thought sufficiently interested in such a matter, we wrote privately before making the public announcement of our intention. From the many replies we received perhaps the following extracts will not be without interest to the general reader.

Mr. Burnand wrote, and, of course, in a characteristic vein:

'DEAR B,—You are a lucky man, and a wise one. A deservedly fortunate pair, and a sagacious couple.

'At *your* age to be able to retire!! My! Wouldn't *I* if I could! But I shall *never* be able to retire; never free, never out of harness, until I lie down in the loose-box and am carried off to the knacker's, unless I go to the dogs previously by some shorter and cheaper route.—Yours ever, F. C. B.'

In spite of a severe attack of illness these sympathetic lines were penned by their accomplished author:

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—Under any circumstances I should have read your letter with true interest and pleasure, but at a time of suffering and depression your remembrance of our old friendship is doubly precious and doubly dear to me. With all my heart, I congratulate you and Mrs. Bancroft on retirement from the toils and cares of a career of management, which will be remembered among the noblest traditions of the English stage.—Always truly yours, WILKIE COLLINS.'

We received the following from an old friend of many years' standing, and heartily shared his regret that we had not been associated with more of his work:

'My dear Bancroft,—I congratulate you heartily upon what I am sure is a subject of congratulation to Mrs. Bancroft and yourself, however discomforting your retirement from management must necessarily be to all play-goers. I only regret that I have not had an opportunity of contributing appreciably to the successful result of your twenty years' work.

'With kindest regards to Mrs. Bancroft, I am, very truly yours, W. S. Gilbert.'

There could be no more competent critic of the circumstances than our old comrade who wrote this letter:

'My dear Bancroft,—I am delighted, though not surprised, to learn that you are in the proud position of being able to retire in the prime of your life from our harassing and wearying profession.

'You have both worked well and loyally, have done the stage the highest service, and well deserve your rest.

'That the same good fortune which has attached itself to you in your public career may follow you in all things in your private life is the very sincere wish of your old friend and fellow-worker, John Hare.'

From a well-known lover of the drama, one to whom we have owed for many years constant acts of kindness, came this warm expression of regret:

'Dear Mr. Bancroft,—Lady Londesborough and myself regretted extremely to learn of the determination of Mrs. Bancroft and yourself to retire from management.

'You have certainly done so much in every sense for your profession (for the difference in the production of pieces, and the rise in the salaries, and consequently in the position of actors and actresses, is mainly owing to you), that you may fairly claim a right to retire; but we shall all sadly miss you both.

'We hope that you will remember to keep a box for us on the melancholy occasion of your farewell, to which we shall certainly go, whenever it may be, and whatever engagement we may have. —Believe me, yours very truly, Londesborough.'

Here is a fragment from a charming letter written by Mr. W. W. Ouless, R.A.:

'Thank you very much for your kind letter, and the mark of friendship, which I warmly appreciate.

'I hope Mrs. Bancroft and you will have many, many years of happiness, and that we shall long enjoy the advantage of seeing the actor even greater for having thrown off the care of management.'

Mr. J. C. Parkinson's words bespeak his true friendship for us:

'I have none of the mixed feeling that will animate those who are naturally pained at losing so much out of their side of your lives. *Mine* is unqualified rejoicing at your timely wisdom. As one of the public, I shall not lose you altogether as artists, and as private friends (by far my strongest part) I hope to be drawn closer to you both in a thousand ways. The wisdom of it! The wisdom of it! If I were absolute fairy monarch, and could decree for you, I would have fixed matters beyond the possibility of retreat precisely as you have fixed them for yourselves.'

Mr. Pinero sent us the following generous and valued words:

'It is my opinion, expressed here as it is elsewhere, that the present advanced condition of the English stage—throwing as it does a clear, natural light upon the manners and life of people, where a few years ago there was nothing but mouthing and tinsel—is due to the crusade begun by Mrs. Bancroft and yourself in your little Prince of Wales's Theatre. When the history of the stage and its progress is adequately and faithfully written, Mrs. Bancroft's name and your own must be recorded with honour and gratitude.'

It was with great pleasure that we read the following from Mr. B. C. Stephenson ('Bolton Rowe'):

'I cannot help telling you how much I regret to hear that Mrs. Bancroft and yourself have made up your minds to retire from management.

'If any two human beings ever deserved repose, certainly you do, and it must be a great satisfaction to be able to claim it at the time when the tide of your success is at its highest.

'Since you took the Prince of Wales's Theatre in hand, the English stage has altered much, and no one has had more to do with its alteration and improvement than yourselves. There is scarcely a theatre in London that does not show the mark of your work, and seldom does a good performance take place without the help of some one who has passed his apprenticeship under your management.'

That distinguished dramatic critic, Mr. Moy Thomas, with whom we have only enjoyed a bare acquaintance, wrote thus:

'The influence of your reign, both at the Prince of Wales's and at the Haymarket, will remain and grow. It is easy, as Tennyson says, to sow when you have the seed. Others have done something towards the remarkable revival of dramatic art in our days, but there is all the difference in the world between originating and following.

'As to Mrs. Bancroft, who is there who will not wish to her, and

all dear to her, a long life of happy leisure, and many a pleasant evening in *front* of the curtain?'

We cannot better close these extracts than by the congratulations of our old friend Mr. Edmund Yates:

'MY DEAR B.,—I am heartily delighted at the news which I received from you ten minutes ago, and I most warmly congratulate you both on your sensible decision.

'Few persons who have not actually been "in the profession" could know so well as I do what that decision means. The triumphs, the applause, the delights of conquering difficulties and converting them into glories, the top-tree position striven for so sedulously, earned with such labour and pains—all these have to be relinquished. But, oh! the exquisite joy of being your own master, of snapping your fingers at the public, careless whether they come or stay away, of being wholly independent of heat or "Healtheries," or anybody's grim patronage!

'To our thinking you have decided most wisely, and we wish you heartiest and happiest enjoyment of your coming enfranchisement. —Always both of yours, E. Y.'

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR FAREWELL SEASON: 1884-85.

Announcement of the Farewell Season—'Interviewed' on the subject—Stage salaries—Long runs destructive to art—Short revivals—*Diplomacy*—Speech on opening night—An escape from fire—Banquet of the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund: Mr. Bancroft proposes the health of Mr. Hare—*Masks and Faces*—Opinion on Mr. Bancroft's Triplet—Mr. J. M. Levy—The dramatic critics—*Ours*—A 'scratch bill': *Katharine and Petruchio*, *Sweethearts*, and *Good for Nothing*—A popular error refuted—Synopsis of productions at both the Prince of Wales's and the Haymarket theatres, and brief account of their ratio of success—Mrs. Bancroft on her characters in Robertson's comedies—Afternoon performance of *Masks and Faces* at the Crystal Palace—Besieged for seats for the farewell night—Letter from Sir William Brett (Lord Esher)—List of members of the company—Letter from J. L. Toole—Compliments and personal tributes—The great crowd—The farewell programme—The audience—Clement Scott's Valedictory Ode, spoken by Henry Irving—Mr. Bancroft's speech—Letters from Sir Algernon Borthwick, Mr. Robert Browning, Sir John Monckton, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. Charles Wyndham, and 'A Lover of the Engadine'—Mr. Bancroft as Chairman at the Royal General Theatrical Fund dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern—Loyal allusions—Mr. Sims Reeves—The toast of the evening—Letter by Mrs. Bancroft—L'envoi.

'MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT beg to announce that this will be their Farewell Season. Soon after the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre on April 15th, 1865, they will retire from management.'

These few words caused a considerable stir in the theatrical

world; they not only drew forth much comment, but leading articles in many of the chief newspapers.

One important morning journal 'interviewed' us, and something of what we said on the subject at the time may more faithfully give our reasons than words since thought out might do:

'When Mr. Bancroft is asked "why he and Mrs. Bancroft are giving up their managerial position while in the prime of life," he answers promptly enough: "For several reasons, which, to us at least, appear good. We think it better to retire while we are, if it may be said with due modesty, high in public favour, one iota of which we should be sorry to lose. In a few more years we might be lost among the crowd of those who have since ourselves attempted to put pieces adequately on the stage, both as to acting and scenery. The reputation we have acquired by years of hard work we wish to keep; and we should like to enjoy some of the fruit from the trees we have planted and laboriously cultivated. It is frequently overlooked that the management of a theatre involves a great deal of attention every day, to say nothing of the perpetual strain of always working months ahead. When you add to this the tedium of rehearsals and the exertion of acting at night, it makes life a round of work. We do not complain. The public have repaid our liberality in management by yet larger liberality. But we are content to rest and be thankful before our distinctive work is forgotten or merged in that of others."

'"You are, I think, responsible in great measure for the present high salaries paid to actors, and for the costly manner in which the public look to see plays put upon the stage?"

'"In great measure, certainly, for the latter, and almost wholly for the former. We do not pretend for a moment that we invented sumptuous *mise en scène*, but we happened to be the persons who brought it so into fashion, as it were, as to secure general imitation or adoption, and that care in little things which has since become almost universal; for it was at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre that the example was set of putting every piece on the stage in a realistic way—our stage-rooms became, in fact, such sumptuous apartments that I remember Sir William Fergusson once saying that "the only drawback to visiting our theatre was that it disgusted him with his own home." It was also our ambition to have every small part in a comedy played as well as possible, and after continued preparation. We began with three weeks' rehearsal for a play, afterwards extended to six, since to a couple of months, and in some cases longer."

'"And the payment of actors?"

'"Salaries have risen, certainly, to an extraordinary extent. A few instances may be amusing. During our career we have paid the same actor, for playing the same part in the same piece, eighteen and sixty pounds a week, with an interval of some ten

years only. There are cases, of course, in which an actor improves his position so rapidly as to command a great increase of salary in the same theatre: for instance, we ended by giving a member of our company ten times the salary at which we originally engaged him; and another, who first received nine pounds a week, was last paid fifty. Such prices would have appeared fabulous twenty years ago. When that great artist, Mrs. Stirling, played in *Caste* at the Haymarket Theatre, she received seven times the salary of the original representative of the Marquise de St. Maur."

'"What is the highest salary you have ever paid?"

'"For a special engagement a hundred pounds a week, with other charges and contingencies. No, it was not to Mrs. Langtry! When we induced Miss Ellen Terry to return to the stage in 1875, she was content with twenty pounds a week, which was considered a high price then. Our finding her, and bringing her back to the stage, is one of our brightest recollections. It was a victory which consoled us amply for an awful defeat. Our *Merchant of Venice* was not merely what the French call 'a baking,' and we English theatrical people call 'a frost'—it was a perfect Moscow!"'

NOTES BY S. B. B.

This rise in salaries was commenced by an unswerving objection to the old custom of all the leading members of a company taking an annual benefit—a system which we worked hard to exterminate, for I strongly hold the opinion that 'benefits' should only be given to actors in distress through illness, or in aid of their families should they be left unprovided for, and on behalf of charitable institutions. A further reason for the increase in actors' incomes may be traced to the acceptance of engagements for special parts and runs of plays instead of for fixed and lengthened periods, as was formerly a general custom.

But to return to our retirement from management—Were there not many other good and valid reasons? What would a barrister say to pleading the same cause for one, two, or three hundred days running, with no occasional rising of the court, even if given the variety of appealing to a fresh jury? Long runs of plays are wonderfully remunerative to the manager, and a great relief from anxiety and work, but must be, eventually, very destructive to our art. After about fifty consecutive nights, in my poor belief, the actor has done all in his power with any part; to say nothing of having then played it to the most appreciative audiences, for that time will have been more or less taken up by keen theatre-goers, and he will afterwards often find himself acting to many who only by the programme know so much as his name. Except at intervals, after some such first run, would it be to the actor's professional advancement to constantly repeat any character, such occasional performances would suffice for showing new ideas and improvements. I think I am inclined, in talking of long runs, to remember the words of the immortal Siddons, when she first entered Drury

Lane Theatre, before the original enormous size of its interior was reduced. The great actress looked quietly round the vast building, and then said, with a sigh: 'Behold the tomb of the drama!'

Besides, for our wants, and the claims upon us, we had all we needed. Great wealth, I fancy, must be a considerable anxiety, and I often think of words I heard spoken by a well-known man of vast riches when asked at a club if he could mention what particular advantages he derived from the possession: 'One only comes to my mind,' he replied. 'I can afford to be robbed.'

There is but little to tell of the acting during this farewell season, for it was mainly given up to short revivals of familiar plays—the first and most successful of them being *Diplomacy*, which had not been acted in London since its production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, nearly seven years before. Although the piece was well played and splendidly received, it was almost impossible for the new cast to vie with the distribution we first gave it, no less than four of the original members being at the date of its revival engaged in management themselves—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. John Clayton, and Mr. Arthur Cecil—while neither of ourselves retained our former characters. Mrs. Bancroft was glad to resign the sorrows of Zicka to the capable hands of Mrs. Bernard-Beere, and to 'write up' for herself into a prominence, which proved of great value to the revival, the minor but more congenial part of Lady Henry Fairfax, which, out of slight material, became an important and enjoyable character. Her amusing description of the Berne clock will be long remembered. On the other hand I gave up, with many a sigh, my favourite Orloff to Mr. Barrymore, a clever actor best known in America, who joined our company for the purpose, thinking that on the whole I should best serve the general effect as Henry Beauclerc, which part was made so marked a feature when we first produced *Diplomacy* by the admirable acting of John Clayton, whose recent death has been a great loss to the stage. Miss Le Thiere's excellent performance of Don Alva's widow alone remained of our first distribution. The cast on Saturday, November 8th, was as follows: Henry Beauclerc, Mr. Bancroft; Julian Beauclerc, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Algie Fairfax, Mr. Elliot; Count Orloff, Mr. Barrymore; Baron Stein, Mr. C. Brookfield; Markham, Mr. Yorke; Antoine, Mr. Charles Eaton; Lady Henry Fairfax, Mrs. Bancroft; Marquise de Rio-Zarès, Miss Le Thiere; Countess Zicka, Mrs. Bernard-Beere; Dora, Miss Calhoun; Mion, Miss Polak. The demonstration when the curtain finally fell was so great as to compel a personal response, which came in these few hastily-thought-over words:

'Ladies and Gentlemen—I have so seldom ventured to address you, and have not troubled you with what have grown to be called "first-night speeches," that you will excuse my thinking your applause to-night to be in some way a wish that I should break

my rule. It would be affectation not to know that part of that applause is provoked by the announcement of our intended retirement from the work—the very hard work, however successful—and the duties of theatrical management. What I may have to say on that subject—which will be far more on behalf of that distinguished member of the profession she adorns, Mrs. Bancroft, than for my own poor part—must, I am sure you will agree with me, be still a little while delayed.

'I will only say now that, perhaps, I have the opinion that no one in any walk of life should keep a position of command too long; and if my wife and I between us have held the reins of management for nearly twenty years, you must forgive us on the plea that we were both exceptionally young when we first took them up.

'Ladies and gentlemen, for all your great kindness to us believe in our gratitude, and let us hope that we shall never forfeit your regard.'

Sardou's *Theodora* was produced in Paris soon afterwards at the Porte St. Martin, and although a brilliant picture of the days of Justinian offered temptation as a final managerial blaze, we decided that the game was hardly worth the candle. Again we contemplated a revival of Boucicault's *Old Heads and Young Hearts*, the author kindly agreeing to revise his work; but we found at rehearsal that inexorable Time had played his part too well, and thought the comedy somewhat old-fashioned. Other ideas included the production of an original comedy written by the accomplished Ouida, the charming dialogue in which did not, to our great regret, compensate for a lack of incident, and that dreadful difficulty to so many delightful writers—construction. It is not an easy task to write, as it were, a three-volume novel in about a tenth of its usual space, and without a descriptive page or the aid of a marginal note.

Just before the withdrawal of *Diplomacy*, we narrowly escaped the catastrophe of fire. A piece of scenery in the garden outside the house at Monte Carlo caught light, and at once alarmed the audience. I immediately took Mrs. Bancroft by the arm, and we walked on the stage together, and stood close to the flame; this presence of mind calmed those who were agitated, while a fireman happily extinguished it with one of the buckets of water and a wet blanket, which are always kept in readiness. The audience behaved with remarkable composure, and, happily, all was well.

My old friend Hare occupied the chair on Ash-Wednesday (the theatres were still closed then) at the banquet of the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund, and on the occasion I had the privilege of proposing his health in these terms: 'Rising so late in the evening to have the honour of saying a few words, I fear they would seem, after the eloquence we have listened to, very like a weak after-piece following a strong play, did I not at once claim your patience by assuring

you that the interest of my story begins with the rising of the curtain, for the great pleasure falls to my lot of asking you to drink to your chairman's health. Mr. Hare is surrounded by many old and dear friends, but I think I may venture to say that I am the oldest, at least of his theatrical friends, for it is now a little over twenty years since we first met in a country theatre, when he was little more than a boy, and I in my early manhood. A friendship was then cemented which has withstood the storms of this fierce fight of life, and remains to me now—one of my most cherished sentiments. There is little need for me to remind you of Mr. Hare's career; of the ten years—perhaps the ten happiest years of my life—he served under the flag of Mrs. Bancroft and myself at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; of the delightful creations on that stage for which we were so indebted to him; nor, when the time came for him to leave us, how our loss was the public gain, as the accomplished actor soon developed into the accomplished manager. In that capacity you may perhaps, in your kindness, accept my admiration for Mr. Hare's work as, in some small way, the opinion of an expert. Without further preface, I ask you to join me in the pleasure of drinking to the health of your chairman, who, as actor and manager, has done much to adorn and uphold the art of which he is so distinguished a follower.'

We next played in *Masks and Faces*, Mr. Forbes-Robertson being the Pomander; Mr. Barrymore, Ernest Vane; Mr. Brookfield, Colley Cibber; Mr. Kemble and Mr. Wyatt the two critics, Soaper and Snarl; and Miss Calhoun, Mabel Vane. The favourite old comedy was warmly welcomed, and many critics dwelt on the regret evoked by our approaching intention, which they kindly said our acting in this revival served largely to increase.

It was a great gratification to me to find unqualified and ungrudging praise given to my third attempt to act the part of Triplet, a performance, whatever its true value, upon which I had bestowed infinite pains. All previous reservations seemed to be withdrawn, and my determination to be fully acknowledged as, in truth, not only an actor of what may be called modern swelldom was, dare I hope? achieved. A very able and, if I may be allowed to say so, not too easily-pleased critic, Mr. William Archer, did me the honour to write his opinion in these words: 'There is no more delicate, more pathetic, more lovable piece of acting than Mr. Bancroft's Triplet on the English stage. The green-room scene appeals to me more irresistibly every time I see it. Such acting would move a heart of stone or an eye of glass. Everyone who has not seen it should see it forthwith, and everyone who has seen it once, twice, or thrice should see it again, even to the seventh time.' The writer of those lines doubtless does not know how much—with many other ably if too generously expressed compliments—they meant to me.

It may be that the revived interest taken by journalists in

theatrical matters went hand in hand with some productions at the little Prince of Wales's Theatre, and it is also probable that much which is beautiful in our art might have been at least retarded but for the keen love and knowledge of the drama possessed by Mr. J. M. Levy, who was, there can be no doubt, the first proprietor of a leading newspaper to regularly give to the subject the space never bestowed upon it with any constancy before. Other journals then followed an example which allowed their writers to greatly help the stage by giving, instead of, as was so often the case in the old days, mere reports of plays, extended and sympathetic reviews upon the work of both the manager and the actor.

My opinion of those who so ably fill the onerous position of writing about the theatre I ventured to comprise in the farewell words I spoke on the part of Mrs. Bancroft and myself when we left the Haymarket Theatre—those words in which I endeavoured to express our deep obligations for constant kindness and encouragement extending from the days of Oxenford, Bayle Bernard, Leicester Buckingham, and others since dead, to those of their accomplished successors, to name whom would be invidious—will be found at the close of this chapter.

To those brief but earnest sentences I would like to add one more thought of the critics and the fulfilment of their work. While sitting in judgment, and in apportioning their praise, perhaps I may be excused for thinking that some among them do not always judge with sufficient care of the ease or difficulty of the actor's immediate task. It may be that certain parts are so easy to play as to be, or as should be, within the means of many able actors ; while, on the other hand, the difficulties of other characters may be so great, almost so insurmountable, that praise may not be always freely enough given to efforts which, without even nearing the goal, are far in the right direction towards the complete realization only within the means of the highest command of acting. I give these views in all humility, and from an actor's point of view. Perhaps the critic's answer would be that it is a technical question, and that it is hardly his business to draw these fine lines ; but thought on the subject, at least, would produce no harm, nor would discussion hurt the art dramatic critics have in recent years done so much to serve.

We felt that the name of Robertson, so intimately associated with our career, should be connected, if only for a short time, with our farewell season, and we arranged with the author's son to give some final performances of *Ours*, having definitely said good-bye to *Caste* and *School* in 1883. This oft-tried friend was at least an appropriate farewell to the six comedies of which series it had been the most frequently revived, although, speaking personally and selfishly, I am bound to say that the monotony of again acting a part which I thought I had done with for ever was greatly increased by tedious rehearsals with those new to the play, and almost amounted to pain. When I resigned myself with a deep

sigh to the inevitable, and was discovered, in the opening scene, asleep under the shade of a big tree, as I heard the familiar air, the 'Chanson de Fortunio,' which was played for the rising of the curtain, I had a sort of brief, wild dream. I thought the tune in cradle-days had been my lullaby, and wondered if it would be chosen for my requiem.

The familiar parts were mostly in new hands, as follows: Prince Perovsky, Mr. C. Brookfield; Colonel Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Kemble; Angus MacAlister, Mr. Barrymore; Hugh Chalcot (for the last times), Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. E. Maurice; Lady Shendryn, Miss Victor; Blanche Haye, Miss Calhoun; Mary Netley (for the last times) Mrs. Bancroft.

Next came a 'scratch bill,' of which the principal item was *Sweethearts*, in which we acted for the first time at the Haymarket; Mr. Gilbert's ever-charming play being followed by *Good for Nothing*, Mrs. Bancroft again appearing as poor Nan; these pieces being preceded by a curtailed version of *Catharine and Petruchio*, as arranged by David Garrick from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio being played by Mr. Forbes-Robertson, Grumio by Mr. Kemble, Biondello by Mr. C. Brookfield, and Katharine by Mrs. Bernard-Beere.

I very nearly decided upon essaying the strange character of Tartuffe, which has not, I think, been acted in English since Webster played it, in place of reviving the old Shakespearian fragment; but I stood in need of greater time to mature my thoughts about it than the approaching close of the season would have given me.

These performances, and a few final repetitions of *Diplomacy* and *Masks and Faces*, brought us to the eventful night of our farewell; but before we speak of that, it may be well to dispose of one or two other matters which we have not yet mentioned.

Rumours and inferences, after awhile, were afloat that one reason for our retirement was that management at the Haymarket had not been so successful as at our former theatre. I took no notice of the reports at the time, thinking, with one of Gilbert's amusing creations at the Savoy Theatre, 'that it really didn't matter.' Eventually, however, I found it advisable to publicly contradict the error in these words: 'In your interesting article, "Plays at Popular Prices," you are kind enough to speak of me in these terms: "Mr. Bancroft was the pioneer of the dear stall. He abolished the pit at the theatre designed under his eye. Eventually he had gracefully to confess to failure, and it would be well if those who followed his lead admitted an error in judgment."

'It is true that in 1874, owing to constantly increasing outlay at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, I instituted the ten-shilling stall; but I must decline to be held responsible if managers of less expensive theatres thought fit to follow my lead, nor is it now my affair as to whether the moment has come for some lessees to

consider a re-arrangement of their charges for admission. But on part of the sentences I quote from your paper I have, if you will permit me, something to say. As I never had reason to regret either being "the pioneer of the dear stall" or having "abolished the pit," I don't know to what failure I "had gracefully to confess."

'I have always refrained from parading the profits and losses of management; but I am not sorry—more in justice to the Haymarket Theatre as a property than in defence of the line of action I pursued there—that your friendly remarks give me an opportunity to contradict what I have read in several newspapers—in words sometimes veiled, sometimes more outspoken—that the resignation of management by Mrs. Bancroft and myself was partly due to the tide of success which followed our efforts at the smaller theatre not having flowed so freely towards the larger house. Let me add that I am willing and prepared to substantiate the following statements in the completest way:

'Briefly, then, our management of the Haymarket Theatre (notwithstanding the large amount expended in its reconstruction, which was borne entirely by us) resulted in almost doubling the sum we had realized at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. This end was achieved by comparatively short "runs," and a consequent great increase of work, the strain of which we soon began to feel. Our resolve to retire from management was arrived at in November, 1883; in October, 1884, that determination was made public; in July, 1885, it took effect. *Voilà tout!*'

At this stage of our book a synopsis of our various productions and a brief account of their ratio of success will, I imagine, deserve the attention of those who may be called, in a way, 'behind the scenes,' while, perhaps, the statement will not be altogether without interest for the general reader.

The natural beginning is to speak first of the six Robertson comedies. *Society* was produced in 1865, was revived twice at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1868 and 1874, and once at the Haymarket, in 1881; counting performances in the provinces, we played *Society* nearly five hundred times. *Ours* was produced in 1866, was revived three times at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1870, 1876, and 1879, and twice at the Haymarket, in 1882 and 1885, being acted by us seven hundred times. *Caste* was produced in 1867, and was revived twice at the little theatre, in 1871 and 1879, once at the Haymarket in 1883, being played by us, including performances at the Standard Theatre, six hundred and fifty times. *Play* was produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1868, and ran one hundred and six nights. It was never revived by us. *School* was produced in 1869, and was once revived at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1873, and twice at the Haymarket, in 1880 and 1883, being acted by us eight hundred times. *M.P.* was first played in 1870 for one hundred and fifty-six nights, and, like *Play*, was never revived by us. This calculation makes in all nearly three thousand performances of the Robertson comedies, representing, in

fact, the evenings, counting rehearsals and deducting Sundays, of ten years of life!

No words—at least no power over words at my command—can add anything to this brief statement. Ten years of life!

The ratio of success achieved by these six comedies was as follows: *School*, first; *Ours*, second; *Caste*, third; *Society*, fourth; *M.P.*, fifth; *Play*, sixth.

As to our other plays, their degrees of success were in the following order: *Diplomacy*, two runs, first; *Masks and Faces*, three runs, second; *Money*, three runs, third; *Fedora*, one run, fourth; *Peril*, two runs, fifth; *Sweethearts* is difficult to place, as it was not long enough to form the sole attraction, but it undoubtedly drew large houses during two runs.

Of other plays acted for one run only, five of them were almost level in result. At the Prince of Wales's the *School for Scandal*, *M.P.*, and *London Assurance* (which was aided materially by being played with the *Vicarage*); at the Haymarket *Odette* and the *Overland Route*. All these productions proved very attractive, but for less periods than those previously named.

Then came seven others, which were also all successful, but in a lesser degree and in the following sequence: *Man and Wife*, *Play*, *An Unequal Match*, and *A Hundred Thousand Pounds* at the Prince of Wales's; at the Haymarket *Lords and Commons*, *The Rivals*, and *Plot and Passion* (the last-named had the great advantage of the companionship of *A Lesson*).

The plays produced by us at the Prince of Wales's Theatre which failed were *The Merchant of Venice*, *How She Loves Him*, *Tame Cats*, *Wrinkles*, and *Duty*.

No production of a new play, or revival of an old one, failed to attract during our management of the Haymarket Theatre.

Taking our plays together, the principal successes were achieved in this order:

For one run:

School	Prince of Wales's	First.
Diplomacy	Prince of Wales's	Second.
Fedora	Haymarket	Third.
Ours	Haymarket	Fourth.
Masks and Faces	Haymarket	Fifth.
Peril	Prince of Wales's	Sixth.

Counting all runs of each play at both theatres:

School	First.
Ours	Second.
Diplomacy	Third.
Masks and Faces	Fourth.
Caste	Fifth.
Money	Sixth.

It may have interest here if I tell the reader, having ceased playing them for ever, which, of all the parts Tom Robertson wrote for me, I liked the best. In this hope I will classify my preference in rotation. First, Naomi Tighe, in

NOTE BY M. E. B.

School. Second, Polly Eccles, in *Caste.* Third, Cecilia Dunscombe, in *M.P.* Fourth, Mary Netley, in *Ours.* Fifth, Rosie Fanquehere, in *Play.* (Of Maud Hetherington, in *Society*, I need not speak, as the play, it will be remembered, was not originally written for us.) Many lovers of the old plays will, perhaps, be surprised at my preference, as I am under the impression that Polly Eccles may be thought to have been my favourite character. No, it was not. I love Polly for the innate fine qualities of her nature; her devotion to her d ssolute, worthless father; her filial desire to screen the worst side of his nature (if there could be a worse) by trying to make him appear a little better in the estimation of others. Her love for her sister; her real goodness under a rough exterior; the under-current of mischief and keen appreciation of humour. All these genuine qualities appealed to me largely, and I hope I understood them, otherwise I do not think I could have made the impression in the part which I am told I did. I thoroughly enjoyed the boundless love of fun, the brisk gaiety of Polly's happy nature, and I felt acutely the pathos of her serious scenes.

The character is very dramatic in parts, and requires all the nervous acting I could bring to bear upon it. The last act of *Caste* is the longest I ever appeared in, and I believe one of the longest in the whole range of the Drama, for it often played nearly an hour and a half, and Polly is but seldom off the stage throughout it. Almost every word she has to say is a pearl, so to speak, and affects the audience more or less. Hers is always a welcome presence, for everyone loves Polly: I am naturally very proud of my success in the part, and feel happy in all that is now left to me—the remembrance of it. Success *must* bring pleasure, and 'labour's light as ease when with cheerfulness 'tis done;' and although Polly is not my favourite character, still I love her for her strange mixture of boisterous fun, tenderness, and affection. The sudden transitions, too, from broad comic humour to deep feeling pleased me, and my heart was therefore in my work. In the situation where George D'Alroy suddenly returns from India when he is thought to be dead, I felt the reality of the scene so thoroughly that I cried every night when acting it. Polly Eccles, as a work of art, did me more credit than all the others, and doubtless, as an artistic effort, stands first in the rank, for she is a difficult part to play: the range of feeling must be very wide to fully reproduce the intentions of the author. *Caste* is assuredly Tom Robertson's *chef-d'œuvre*, and one of the cleverest plays written in my time. Well, then why, in the face of all this, was not Polly Eccles my favourite part?

I fear I can only give a woman's reason, and say that 'it was not': I certainly felt happier when I was playing Naomi Tighe—dear 'Nummy!' I affectionately hug the memory of 'Nummy,' and wear her in my 'heart of hearts' as freshly as though I were still representing her. The artless simplicity and sunny nature of 'Nummy,' the utter ignorance of the existence of any sadness in the whole world except what school discipline enforces, her fearless

and open avowal of her romantic adoration for Jack Poyntz, make her a lovable thing. She is one big slice of sunshine, and she had no drunken father! It was a delight to act Naomi Tighe; she is as fresh as country butter, and every word she utters breathes the unladen atmosphere of a bright, green spot 'far from the madding crowd.'

Speaking of 'Nummy' reminds me of our early rehearsals of *School*. One morning, we were going through the scene where Lord Beaufoy, having found a tiny shoe which had slipped from Bella's foot as she ran away alarmed at a galloping bull, but which he carefully hides, asks the girls 'if they have lost anything.' They both reflect and look about, but cannot imagine what it can be, as nothing seems missing. This particular morning, so imbued and engrossed was I in the situation, that while wondering what I could have lost, I instinctively and in alarm suddenly put my hand to my chignon with a look of terror, and remained so for a second. This purely impulsive action so amused and impressed Tom Robertson that he begged me to do it at night. I did so, and I shall never forget the burst of laughter and applause which greeted its effect. Needless to add, I repeated it every night until further notice, and the 'business' was written by Robertson in his book.

Cecilia Dunscombe in *M.P.* was a part I liked immensely, and I always felt sorry not to have had a chance of playing her again. She was written as a type of a 'girl of the period,' who, if not carefully handled, might on the stage become offensive. There are many temptations in a part of this calibre to enlarge upon the eccentricities of a 'good fellow' sort of woman. I was careful to preserve all the points the author intended when he wrote the play; but I worked to make the audience like her, by giving an amusing, but, at the same time, a feminine rendering of her character. A leading critic was good enough to say of this performance: 'The perfect command of appropriate gesture and movement; the subtler play of feature; the power to indicate, in spite of an exterior of frivolity and mirth, a deeper and more earnest nature—these are things which on our stage are unhappily given but to the few.'

I thoroughly enjoyed the last act. Robertson always gave me a *carte blanche* to do what I liked with the parts he wrote for me, and often said 'he knew full well that he could trust to my good taste and discretion.' I think my instincts never misguided me. When poor Tom, who was then fading fast, saw *M.P.*, he said to me, 'I must write more parts for you, Marie; it does me good, for I can see you as I put the words on paper!' He *never* wrote another. I have an affection for Cecilia Dunscombe, and one reason may be that this was the last part I ever created for the author, although he would often, during his sad illness, speak hopefully of the three plays he had made up his mind to write for us to succeed one another, which were to be called, in turn, *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*—'such good parts for you, Marie,' he would

say. It made me wretched indeed to hear him talk in that way when I knew how fatal was his malady.

Mary Netley is not a good part to read in the book, and had not Tom Robertson asked me to 'build it up,' she would have fallen comparatively flat upon the audience. When he had finished reading the piece to us, he begged me to do all I could in the scene which concerned me in the last act, for somehow he felt unable to make Mary as prominent as he wished, so at the rehearsals I set to work, and invented business and dialogue, which, happily, met with his approval; he declared I greatly helped the act, which was not only improbable, but in parts very weak. The audience laughed at the fun, and forgave the rest. I must confess that I often felt a little ashamed of the expedients I was obliged to adopt, and was fully conscious that it was not art, only fun and frolic, where we pretended to be soldiers going through our exercises. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it, however; for although it was improbable, it was harmless and amusing. I remember with what care I made the famous roley-poley pudding every night during the first run of *Ours*. This pudding was eagerly waited for by a little family of poor children—I made a very big one and filled it with jam. *Ours* was, in spite of its weak points in the last act, a great favourite with the public, and never failed to be our good friend whenever we called upon it to help us, and so, as a true friend, it will be a treasure in 'my memory locked.'

Rosie Fanquehere in *Play* was a slenderly-written part, as, indeed, was the whole comedy, which depended greatly upon the acting, it being so slight in plot and incident, and the weakest, in every sense, of Robertson's works. There was a pretty moment in the first act, where I had to describe my sensations when drowning; this was written in very simple, unaffected language: the speech never failed to touch me as I delivered it, and the audience also were often moved to tears. I had an effective scene in the ruins of the Alte Schloss with poor Montague, who played Frank Price charmingly. It was one of the prettiest of love-scenes. We sang a duet, partly in English, partly in German. I often look at a picture of the scene on a copy of the music, and note how good the likenesses must have been then. But the piece was too slender to endure a revival, so after the first run poor Rosie disappeared. This part is the last in my list because she was the least attractive to me. But all the plays were my good friends, and I love them, and thank them. Good-bye, 'Nummy' (dear 'Nummy!'), Polly, Cecilia, Mary, and Rosie; I shall, while memory lasts, cherish and remember you with grateful thoughts. I kiss my hands to you all, my dear companions and playmates. In every beat of my heart there is a corner kept for you. Often, when I am alone, I think of you, and live again in the sweet and joyous words we spoke together. Good-bye, good-bye; as I write my farewell to you, every letter holds a tear.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

An experience quite new to us was an afternoon performance of *Masks and Faces*, which we gave, after repeated requests, at the Crystal Palace. Notwithstanding the broiling July heat, the large theatre was packed in a remarkable way, and we and the play were received with enthusiasm. When it was over, the bulk of the audience, largely composed of ladies, walked round to the stage-door, and there formed a long lane, through which we were obliged to pass to get away. We hesitated for a time, but at last, in answer to the manager's earnest entreaties, gave way, and so made a sort of royal progress out of the building. Scores of ladies followed Mrs. Bancroft with the kindest demonstrations of more than good feeling, and she drove home laden with pretty baskets and bunches of flowers, deeply touched by the many sweet words that were spoken to her.

From the day that our farewell was announced, the booking-office was besieged by applications, made in every possible way, to secure seats for the last night of our management, and it became a very difficult matter to deal with them, as no building that I know anything about would have held the many thousands who honoured us with a wish to be present. On all important occasions the task of the management is very onerous in apportioning the seats, but for so special a night the difficulties were a hundred-fold increased. To accommodate as large a number as was possible, the ordinary capacious stall and balcony armchairs were taken away, and smaller ones placed in their stead. This, of course, made room for a great many. We had another difficulty to contend with in the efforts made to obtain admission, at almost any cost, by bribery, and only owing to the perfect loyalty of all concerned was it possible to secure our intention that every place in the theatre should be either sold at the ordinary charge or given away. This, so far as we were concerned, was accomplished, every single seat being disposed of direct from the theatre, and the vouchers only issued at the last moment, it being impossible for us to do more to prevent them being sold again, or to say what might have been paid for tickets that may have changed hands, as twenty guineas were freely offered for a corner in any part of the theatre by enthusiasts.

We were much honoured by the Prince of Wales suggesting the date, in order that he might, with the Princess of Wales, be present; while the Prince and Princess Christian signified their intention to occupy a private box. Very great compliments were also paid us by all 'sorts and conditions of men' in the personal letters we received wishing seats to be reserved.

The final programme was a subject of much thought.

Immediately on his return from America—I think in April—Irving had expressed his earnest wish to take part in it, either in acting or speaking an address, as we might think for the best, an offer we gratefully accepted, it being agreed that he should speak some appropriate lines which our old friend Clement Scott consented to write: and whose acknowledgment of our wish that he

would do us this service came in these words: 'If this were not indeed a "labour of love," I should never put pen to paper any more, or cudgel my brains in any delightful cause again. I take it as an act of extreme friendship to endow me with this "office of love." This compliment to me shows that you two, who are about my oldest friends, recognise that I have some place in the revivalism that you instituted. My sole fear is that, with all my earnest endeavours, I shall not be able to do full justice to a theme that is so dear to my heart, or to express with adequate enthusiasm what I really feel.'

We decided that it would give a distinctive character to the event to limit those who acted on the occasion to the names of past and present members of our companies, of whom we have compiled the following interesting list, many among them having made their first appearances on the stage, or in London, under our management:

Mr. Addison,
Mr. F. Archer,
Mr. Barrymore,
Mr. Kyrle Bellew,
Mr. Alfred Bishop,
Mr. Blakeley,
Mr. E. H. Brooke,
Mr. C. Brookfield,
Mr. Lionel Brough,
Mr. Carne,
Mr. R. Cathcart,
Mr. Arthur Cecil,
Mr. John Clarke,
Mr. John Clayton,
Mr. Coghlan,
Mr. Collette,
Mr. H. B. Conway,
Mr. F. Cooper,
Mr. Dacre,
Mr. Stewart Dawson,
Mr. Denison,
Mr. F. Dewar,
Mr. E. Dyas,
Mr. Elliot,
Mr. Ellwood,
Mr. Everill,
Mr. Eversfield,
Mr. Fabert,
Mr. Flockton,
Mr. F. Glover,
Mr. Hare,
Mr. W. Herbert,
Mr. George Honey,
Mr. David James,
Mr. Kemble,
Mr. Kendal,
Mr. Markby,
Mr. E. Maurice,
Mr. H. J. Montague,
Mr. Montgomery,
Mr. Reginald Moore,
Mr. Odell,
Mr. Perceval-Clark,
Mr. Pinero,
Mr. J. W. Ray,
Mr. Lin Rayne,
Mr. Forbes-Robertson,
Mr. Smedley,
Mr. Standing,
Mr. Sugden,
Mr. Teesdale,
Mr. Terriss,
Mr. H. Vaughan,
Mr. Vollaire,
Mr. Arthur Wood,
Mr. Chas. Wyndham,
Mr. F. Younge,
Mr. William Younge,
Miss Carlotta Addison,
Mrs. Bernard-Beere,
Miss Brennan,
Miss Fanny Brough,
Miss Buckstone,
Miss Calhoun,
Mrs. Canninge,
Miss Carlisle,
Miss Cavalier,
Miss Ada Cavendish,
Miss Maria Daly,
Miss Linda Dietz,
Miss Ada Dyas,
Miss Erskine,
Miss Lydia Foote,
Miss Gerard,
Miss B. Goodall,
Miss C. Grahame,
Miss Julia Gwynne,
Miss Henri,
Miss Hertz,
Miss Henrietta Hodson,
Miss Fanny Josephs,
Mrs. Kendal,
Mrs. Langtry,
Miss Larkin,
Miss Le Thiere,
Miss Litton,
Miss Rose Massey,
Miss Measor,
Miss Mellon,
Madame Modjeska,
Miss Louisa Moore,
Mrs. Gaston Murray,
Mrs. Leigh Murray,
Miss Kate Phillips,
Miss Kate Rorke,
Miss Amy Roselle,
Mrs. Saville,
Mrs. Stirling,
Miss Ellen Terry,
Miss Marion Terry,
Miss Lydia Thompson,
Miss Tilbury,
Mrs. Herman Vezin,
Miss Victor,
Miss Florence Wade,
Miss Warden,
Miss Maud Williamson,
Miss Augusta Wilton,
Miss Blanche Wilton,
Mrs. John Wood,
Miss Sophie Young.

Needless to say, the following characteristic note was hailed with the heartiest of welcomes :

'Garrick Club, *June* 9, 1885.

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—I need scarcely tell you what great pleasure it will give me to do something on the occasion of your retirement from management : play the audience in or out ; as early as you choose, or as late ; or even, on such an interesting evening, turn up the gas ; go round with the apples, oranges, etc. ; ring up the curtain ; clear the stage, or anything ! With all kind messages to your dear wife, sincerely yours, J. L. TOOLE.'

I will not dwell in further detail on the great compliments paid us by those who took part in the entertainment, as a copy of the playbill will speak more eloquently than would any words of ours. We must, however, briefly allude to some of the many personal tributes which tended so largely to complete it. Several managers of leading theatres changed their programmes, or altered the hours of commencement, in order to be present, while other friends sacrificed some days of hard-earned holiday to remain purposely in England, or returned from the Continent to do us honour. 'We can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks !'

It was with great pleasure we received a large silver goblet, inscribed : 'A grateful remembrance from the working staff behind the scenes,' which was presented, on behalf of the subscribers, in affectionate terms by Mr. Hastings, who had passed so many years under our management. We could not fail to be greatly interested at seeing all the contributors to the gift ranged in two groups upon the stage—those who had served us in both theatres being divided from the others who had been with us at the Haymarket only. We also exchanged souvenirs with all the members of our company. The gifts presented to us we shall ever highly prize.

There is not much more to tell. Very early on the eventful day earnest knots of people began to assemble round the doors leading to the unreserved seats, which we would not allow to be secured in advance. I have heard of the most enthusiastic among those present at Macready's farewell of the stage, when plays began much earlier than now, being at the pit entrance of Drury Lane by one o'clock ; and when Charles Kean retired from the Princess's, I was myself in the crowd before four : but devoted indeed is the playgoer who thinks nothing nowadays of arriving with his camp-stool and sandwiches at ten a.m. to see a play begin quite ten hours later. Hour by hour the number swelled. It grew so large at last, and so utterly beyond all chance of more than a fraction of it ever fighting its way into the theatre, that the traffic had to be turned aside by the police, and sent, to the amazement of many occupants of cabs and other vehicles, by neighbouring thoroughfares.

The whole proceeding had a strange, magnetic effect upon me.

and I watched it long and often. It would be wrong, however, to presume that our readers could share the sentiment; and without further trial to their patience, we will let a copy of the playbill say what was acted, and by whom:

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

Farewell programme on the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's Retirement from Management, Monday, July 20, 1885.

Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales having graciously signified their intention to be present.

The selections from *Money* and *London Assurance* will be acted entirely by past members of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's companies, who have volunteered this compliment to their former managers.

At eight o'clock will be played

THE FIRST ACT OF LORD LYTTON'S COMEDY,

MONEY.

LORD GLOSSMORE	Mr. Alfred Bishop.
SIR FREDERICK BLOUNT	Mr. Charles Wyndham.
SIR JOHN VESEY	Mr. Collette.
CAPTAIN DUDLEY SMOOTH	Mr. Archer.
MR. GRAVES	Mr. Arthur Cecil.
MR. STOUT	Mr. David James.
ALFRED EVELYN	Mr. Coghlan.
MR. SHARP	Mr. Blakeley.
GROOM OF THE CHAMBERS	Mr. Sugden.
BUTLER	Mr. John Clayton.
LADY FRANKLIN	Mrs. Stirling.
CLARA DOUGLAS	Miss Ellen Terry.
GEORGINA VESEY	Mrs. Langtry.
MAIDSERVANT	Mrs. John Wood.

A SCENE FROM DION BOUCICAULT'S COMEDY,

LONDON ASSURANCE.

SIR HARCOURT COURTLY	Mr. Hare.
CHARLES COURTLY	Mr. Terriss.
DAZZLE	Mr. Kendal.
DOLLY SPANKER	Mr. A. W. Pinero.
MAX HARKAWAY	Mr. F. Everill.
SERVANT	Mr. Kyrle Bellew.
LADY GAY SPANKER	Mrs. Kendal.
GRACE HARKAWAY	Miss Carlotta Addison.

Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, with members of their present company,

WILL PLAY THE SECOND AND THIRD ACTS OF

MASKS AND FACES:

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY,

Written by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor.

SIR CHARLES POMANDER	Mr. Forbes-Robertson.
ERNEST VANE	Mr. Barrymore.

JAMES QUIN	MR. E. MAURICE.
COLLEY CIBBER	MR. C. BROOKFIELD.
MR. SOAPER	MR. ELLIOT.
MR. SNARL	MR. KEMBLE.
TRIPLET	MR. BANCROFT.
LYSIMACHUS	MISS KATE GRATTAN.
JAMES BURDOCK	MR. PERCEVAL-CLARK.
COLANDER	MR. C. EATON.
HUNDSDON	MR. YORK.
PEG WOFFINGTON	MRS. BANCROFT.
MABEL VANE	MISS CALHOUN.
KITTY CLIVE	MISS MAUD WILLIAMSON.
MRS. TRIPLET	MRS. CANNINGE.
ROXALANA	MISS MABEL GRATTAN.

MR. HENRY IRVING will speak a few parting words, written in verse by Mr. Clement Scott; and MR. J. L. TOOLE will appear. MR. BANCROFT will bid farewell.

It would be a hopeless task to give a correct description of the audience, or a complete list of the well-known names of leading people in their varied walks of life who honoured us by their presence, for many celebrities, who had failed to obtain other seats, were hidden away in the upper circles. Suffice it to say, that of diplomacy, politics, and society, most distinguished representatives were present: as was equally the case with the army and sister service, the law, medicine, science, and the Church; while the Royal Academy sent us not only its accomplished President, but many others whose great names are household words; literature in every branch, and journalism in all aspects, seemed to bristle in the stalls, as was the case with music and the drama; indeed, a list of names would be but a brief epitome of 'Men of the Time.'

I have not the power to describe, as might be, the demeanour of this wonderful audience throughout the evening, and their cordial welcome of favourite after favourite. As the time approached for Mrs. Bancroft to go on the stage as Peg Woffington, I asked for a knife, and cut a hole in part of the scene, that I might see the effect of her appearance as well as hear her greeting. I borrowed an opera-glass for the purpose, and caught a hurried glimpse of several friends; I recollect being reminded, by the powerful face of Sir Henry Thompson, of a kind invitation to join one of his delightful 'octaves' in the first days of my emancipation. I also saw our dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Charles Skirrow; and, if I remember rightly, close to the stage was Mrs. Gabrielli, and, further away, Mrs. Quintin Twiss. Just before Mrs. Bancroft entered I caught sight of Lady Dorothy Nevill, looking, as usual, like a charming picture of one of her own ancestors; and of a face rarely seen at the play—that of Robert Browning.

The demonstration was very moving, and very extraordinary; while the warmth of my own reception, a few minutes later, I confess, bewildered me; it seemed like the sound and roar of many voices, but I could see nothing; and never do in playing parts

like Triplet, in which it is impossible to wear any sort of eyeglasses. When the play was over I had to go hurriedly to my room to change my clothes and prepare for my final words, so, alas! I did not hear Irving speak Scott's ode, which I am told he delivered with infinite grace, as in the days of epilogues and prologues to the play: the ovation which greeted him only travelled to me, as later on I was conscious of the loud bursts of laughter which followed Toole's humorous but affectionate speech. I reached the wings in time to hear him express his concluding hope that the brief engagement of Irving and himself under our management, which was limited in fact to one night, would not be reported as having been the means of closing the theatre! I think I have told all that may have interest, for I must yield to Mrs. Bancroft a woman's privilege —the last word. Before that is uttered I will find space for Clement Scott's verses, and for the farewell words I did my best to speak:

A VALEDICTORY ODE.

A friend and neighbour from the busy Strand,
Warned by the summons of Fate's prompting Bell,
Has come to take two comrades by the hand,
And bid them both regretfully 'Farewell.'

Parting to lovers may be 'sorrow sweet,'
To friends all separation must give pain;
But time, consoling, turns the travelled feet,
And tells the parted—they may meet again.

No age or sickness saddens this adieu,
No piteous cause I plead, no alms I beg;
My toast is 'Triplet, here's long life to you,
And years more laughter to delightful Peg.'

The sailor sights at last his native land,
The swallow follows to accustomed nest;
So, two tried actors, toiling hand in hand,
Demand at last toil's after-blessing—Rest.

Their steady course was fann'd by favouring gales,
Their loyal purpose dimm'd by no regret;
Sponsors they stood to infant 'Prince of Wales,'
With life renewed the classic 'Haymarket.'

Not to all artists, earnest though their aim,
As retrospective vision there appears
The priceless gift of an untarnished name,
The blameless history of twenty years.

Fired by the flush of youth, they found a way
To give to fading art a healthy cure;
The stage they loved revived beneath their sway,
They made art earnest, and they kept it pure.

Shall we forget, at this their parting hour,
How fact and fancy intertwine and blend?
Saying, 'The Stage acknowledged them a power,
Actor and actress found in them a friend.'

'*Ars est celare artem*,' 'tis inscribed,
Crowning this stage, and fancifully wrought;
From great ones past this precept they imbibed,
This needful lesson dutifully taught.

Dramatic flowers they gathered by the way,
And chose the brightest wheresoe'er it grows ;
Never disdaining to contrast in play
French tiger-lily with sweet English rose.

With kindly Robertson they formed a 'School,'
Rejoiced in 'Play' after long anxious hours ;
'Caste' was for them, and theirs, a golden rule,
And thus by principle we made them 'Ours.'

Such an example in the after age
Will throw a softening haze o'er bygone care ;
We close the volume at its brightest page,
But leave a blossom of remembrance there.

Good-bye, the cup of sympathy let's fill,
We'll drink it deep ere sorrow's sun be set ;
Together you have mounted life's long hill,
And leave behind no record of regret.

Good-bye, old friends, it shall not be farewell ;
Love is of art the birth and after-growth ;
'Heaven prosper you' shall be our only knell,
Our parting prayer be this, 'God bless you both.'

When Toole had finished and the audience was recovering from the effect of the amusement he had caused, the stage was strewn with the beautiful flowers that had been arriving throughout the evening for Mrs. Bancroft, and in their midst—full of the thought how serious the moment really was to us—I spoke these farewell words :

'May it please your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen, —For a long time now I have dreaded this moment, and have often wondered if, when it came, I should be able to speak to you at all. My best hope of doing so is in the remembrance that I have to offer, as well as my own thanks, the thanks of Mrs. Bancroft, whose life, from her early childhood, has been passed in the service of the public, for the many years of constant kindness shown to us, not only by this brilliant and representative audience, but by that great world of friends unknown, yet known so well—the public.

'We do not take this, to us, important step without full reflection —we know how much, in resigning management, we give up, but release from the sordid side of life, which must have its share in every profession, makes some amends—while that which for so long a time has been our pride is also a great responsibility, and, believe me, we value your regard too highly to risk for a moment a fraction of its decay.

'We feel how far beyond our merits are the honours and compliments which have been showered upon us from every side, and I am deeply conscious of the poverty of my attempt to acknowledge them. Robbed now of the actor's art, I must ask you to clothe my words with all the eloquence and wealth of thanks I mean them to convey ; but I almost think the sympathy between us at this

moment is beyond words. If it has been my privilege to spare Mrs. Bancroft such labour and anxieties as should not be a woman's lot, how amply have I been a thousand-fold repaid! Most of us, I think, owe Mrs. Bancroft something, but I am by far the heaviest in her debt. I alone know how she has supported me in trouble, saved me from many errors, helped me to many victories; and it is she who has given to our work those finishing touches, those last strokes of genius, which, in all art, are priceless. And so, ladies and gentlemen, we worked together until we earned, very gradually, our proud possession—the confidence of the public. Whatever that work may be worth, it has been thorough and honest, for neither of us has ever bought any man's favour. It would ill become me to talk of what we have tried to do, but should we be remembered as the humble pioneers of anything that may have advanced the art we love—if we should be thought, in some way, to have helped to make its position better than we found it, it would be a high distinction. No general can succeed without a staff and an army. In every branch our fellow-workers—from those distinguished authors and actors, those masters of the craft, whose names will spring at once to your memories, to the humblest members of our ranks, have been so loyal and so forbearing to us that we shall feel for ever in their debt. Indeed, it is but the simple truth to say that all we have earned of fame and fortune we owe to the calling we have followed, and it would be a poor return not to give it back the brightest feelings of our natures.

'Now that my words are, I hope, beyond the fear of misconstruction, I would like to acknowledge our obligations to that great power, the Press; which of late years, in my humble judgment, has done much to aid the actor and his art to reach the position they enjoy. It seems to me that at no time in the history of the Stage, when the managers have worked in a bold spirit and towards good ends, have the dramatic critics so quickly stood by their sides and marched with them on the road. Individually I owe much to the Press. I can truly say I never read an adverse opinion of my own work without thinking if it were correct. I have generally had to admit that it was, and the result has been at least an earnest effort to lessen the faults that may have been found with me.

'I beg leave to offer, as managers, our heartfelt thanks to the gentlemen of the Press for their encouragement, so valuable to youth, of our earlier efforts, while we shall always remember the honour they have done us in judging our maturer work by the highest standard.

'Our thanks are not yet exhausted; how cordially are they due to those old comrades who have come here to-night to give us so strong a sign of their goodwill, joined by those valued friends, John Toole and Henry Irving. The distinction given to our retirement by such proofs of friendship, and by Mr. Irving's recital of Mr. Scott's generous poem, are, to us, beyond value. Let me ask them

to believe that our remembrance of their kindness—like our remembrance of this scene—will never pass away.

'Ladies and gentlemen, I have detained you too long. I must not impose upon your generosity, to which I have no better claim than some devotion to hard work, although your goodness tempts me to say one thing of myself which may secure me that fragment of your remembrance I ask as my own. It is now more than twenty-four years since, as a lad of nineteen, I first tried to become an actor; during that time, averaging, I think, between ten and eleven months of every year, whenever my name has been in a playbill I have appeared in answer to it, having never once failed, to the best of my strength, in my duty to the public. I cannot longer defer the pain I must give myself—to say how much we thank you is but little, to feel how much we thank you is a great deal. Whether as actors it may sometimes be our delight and our privilege to appear at intervals before you, I don't yet know; but as managers I have now, in my wife's name and my own, to bid you good-bye. We do so, ladies and gentlemen, with feelings of thankfulness, of great respect, and, if you will permit us to approach you so nearly, with feelings of deep affection.'

Mrs. Bancroft's pen shall tell what followed; I will only detain the reader with a few and varied extracts from many letters on the subject, and some words I spoke two evenings later as Chairman at the Banquet in aid of the Royal Theatrical Fund, when I succeeded in raising, naturally to my pride and gratification, a subscription list which passed all previous records, amounting to £1,300.

What follows immediately needs no further introduction:

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—I have observed your career from its beginning, and can bear testimony to the enormous improvement you have effected on the English stage.

'You were the first to teach the school of Nature, and not only by your own bright impersonations, but also by your influence over all those with whom you were brought in contact, to prove that English Art is second to none.

'Following in your footsteps, and emulous of your achievements, many have attained fame and fortune. But it is my firm belief that to you, and to you especially, is to be attributed the great and successful development of our Modern Drama.—Sincerely yours, ALGERNON BORTHWICK.'

'DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,—Are you too tired of being told how much everybody admires and loves you both? All I can say is, that I heartily wish I had been privileged to begin feeling twenty years ago what I feel now, and I shall make myself what amends are in my power by feeling as long as I live.

'All happiness to you, from yours, gratefully and affectionately ever, ROBERT BROWNING.'

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,—You and your wife will be in receipt of numberless letters of admiration and sympathetic farewell. Let me and mine add *our* mite, and congratulate you both most warmly on the demonstration of last night.

'I myself am a pretty old playgoer, dating from "old Dowton"—whom I well knew on the "Kent circuit" about 1840—the elder Farren, Mrs. Glover, etc., and in bygone days never missed any event of genuine interest. Among the most prominent of such occasions was the farewell of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, on Monday August 29, 1859. (I have my stall ticket still by me.) The *Times* spoke of it as "one of the most imposing ovations ever seen within the walls of a theatre," and it was; last evening was another, but there was this difference—the thoroughly representative character of last night's audience was *never*, in my experience, equalled. Therein shines the true public feeling, all up and down the ladder, towards you both, and on this Lady Monckton and myself so heartily and sympathetically congratulate you.—With kindest wishes, I am, your old friend, JOHN B. MONCKTON.'

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,—Will you allow me to be one of the crowd who will assemble on the night of the 20th, to express their regret at your retirement from management, *for regret will be the general feeling?*

'My career was *ended* when yours *began*.

'With kindest regards to Mr. Bancroft and yourself, believe me, yours sincerely, MARY ANNE KEELEY.'

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—I congratulate you on the brilliant termination of an honourable career of management. How strange are the phases of life! Little did I think on the occasion of my first seeing you in Liverpool (when you acted in the *Woman in Mauve*) that I should see you in the exceptionally proud position you stood in last Monday; and still less that I should be classed amongst your friends, permitted to add my quota to the goodwill and admiration you were greeted with.

'My kindest regards and best wishes to you both, my dear Bancroft, and believe me, yours sincerely, CHAS. WYNDHAM.'

'DEAR MADAM,—How many of your most respectful admirers were unable to be present at your farewell last night you will never know; but many of us absent in body were yet present in spirit. You have helped the humble writer of this letter in so many ways, and not least in having cleared away the mists of prejudice and ignorance which a puritanical education had raised up.

'It has been by such good work as yours and your husband's

that the Drama has risen to its proper position, and been ennobled even in the eyes of those brought up to despise and condemn it.—Yours truly, A LOVER OF THE ENGADINE.'

In spite of the heat and the lateness of the season, there was a wonderful gathering in the large hall of the Freemasons' Tavern on the evening of Wednesday, July 22nd; but I will not trouble the reader with any more lists of names. In proposing the toast of 'The Queen' I ventured to say:

'Duty and pleasure are rarely so happily combined as in the honour a chairman enjoys while proposing the "Health of Her Majesty." As an actor it will always be a personal regret with me that the privilege of appearing before the Queen has not fallen to my lot, but her Majesty ceased to go to the play in the year I went upon the stage.'

I also give an extract from the next Royal toast:

'It is a privilege and a distinction, which must be highly valued by an actor, to ask such a representative gathering as this to drink to the health of one who has in the most gracious way, and for many years, shown sympathy with, and interest in, the stage and its professors. I need not say I have the honour to allude to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. With, I hope, a full sense of my duty to the Prince of Wales, I venture to say that the sentiments with which his Royal Highness is regarded by those whom I at this moment represent are best expressed by the word affection.' The day following being fixed for the marriage of the Princess Beatrice, was an opportunity for some reference to her Royal Highness and her Majesty, which was warmly cheered: 'I cannot complete this toast without alluding to the ceremony of to-morrow, and wishing the Princess Beatrice in her marriage the happiness so deserved by a life which has sweetly illustrated all that is beautiful in filial devotion.'

I must not refrain from mentioning that Mr. Sims Reeves, who not only did me the honour to offer his services, but wrote to tell me that he meant to sing 'The Death of Nelson' and 'The Bay of Biscay,' then fulfilled his promise in a way which roused the audience to extreme enthusiasm, to be even increased when the great singer responded with his exquisite rendering of 'My Pretty Jane.'

I was also under great obligations to my friends Edmund Yates, J. C. Parkinson, Arthur Pinero, Justin McCarthy, Comyns Carr, T. H. S. Escott, Charles Dickens, and John Hare, for their eloquence on the occasion. I failed to persuade Barry Sullivan, who was present, to join the speakers, but he generously added fifty guineas to my subscription list, as did a warm-hearted friend, Warren William de la Rue.

In proposing the 'toast of the evening,' to which I had given a great deal of thought, I said:

'I shall beg you to join me in drinking to the continued prosperity of "The Royal General Theatrical Fund." While I feel deeply the compliment of being allowed to do so, I feel still more deeply the responsibility of venturing to follow in the wake of those distinguished men who have addressed you from this chair—men known throughout the land by their genius, illustrious from their position and their rank, or esteemed for their talents and their culture by all the world. But dwarfed as I am by the great gifts of my predecessors, I will yield to none of them in my desire to serve, to the utmost of my power, the calling I have the honour to follow, and to which I owe so much.

'I will not attempt a detailed account of the work of this Fund —a very old friend of mine will best do that—Mr. Thomas Swinbourne, with whom I had the pleasure to act in 1861, the first year I was on the stage—indeed, I can remember well the agony I suffered while playing Osric—a part in which I could not make up my mind to wear an eyeglass, lest I should let the Prince of Denmark fall when I had to catch him—but here he is to bear witness that he made a swan-like end in my arms; and another old friend, my first manager, Mr. Mercer Simpson, is present to vouch for this having occurred in his theatre. And to these old friends I owe some of the earliest words of encouragement I ever received. Mr. Swinbourne will tell you of the Fund's good work better than I can, while I content myself with an appeal on broader lines, helped in the endeavour to stir your kind and charitable feelings by the thought that I am addressing many whom I have the honour to call my friends, and by the knowledge that you are all lovers of the drama. I will even venture to think of you for the moment as in the drama's debt, for is there anyone present who does not owe something to the players? Have they not soothed for you many a care and lightened many a sorrow? I don't say this in any sense as an apologist; I can only ask for your help, confident in the hope that you regard the actor as a member of an onerous and responsible profession, for I hold the belief that the stage, like every other calling, as respect is shown to it, will so respect itself.

'It is not with the bright and glittering side of my art I have to deal to-night; not with those happy few who, having toiled long and steadily up the steepest of all roads—the road that bears the finger-post to fame—have snatched its prizes; though even with the mightiest actor let me remind you how fleeting is his renown, how far less lasting his hold upon posterity than that enjoyed by the followers of every other intellectual calling in the world. Brilliant as his triumphs are in the moments of success (and far be it from me to undervalue their delights), his work is not carved in marble—is not cut in stone—it lives not even upon canvas. When the last words of his part in the play are spoken, their tones—the speaker's looks—are buried by the remorseless curtain as it falls,

and have but a lame existence in criticism and tradition. £70,000 may enrich our National Gallery with the magic art of Raphael, but ten times that sum could not buy for us one performance by David Garrick. The path the actor treads is laid but with sand, and his footmarks can in a moment be almost washed away, either by some sad calamity, as ill-health, or by whatever wave may be the fashion of the hour, leaving only the "baseless fabric of a vision."

'But I am wandering from my proper purpose. My duty is a simple one, and, were I better able to discharge it, would be delightful to me. I have to appeal to you for aid, not for the improvident and undeserving, but for those who have for many years helped themselves, who have put something regularly away, by their subscriptions to this fund, towards the dull winters of lives passed in your service—old soldiers indeed who have well earned their pensions. The shining lights of the stage would burn less brightly were they not carefully tended by their valuable subordinates. Shylock could not act his grandest scene but for the humble aid of Tubal; while Sir Peter and Lady Teazle might have lived more happily together but for Mr. Snake.

'I fear I am speaking too long. Let me remember—

> '"My tongue within my lips I rein,
> For who talks much, must talk in vain."

'In conclusion, may I say this—and forgive me if my words take a personal tone. I don't appear as the advocate of a cause of which I know little or nothing. The brief which has been entrusted to me I hold, as it were, for my poorer brethren—for those who are old and perhaps forgotten. I am an actor pleading to you for actors, and I speak as one who has tasted the bitters as well as the sweets of his craft; as one who has seen in his life, from actors, such deeds of self-denial, of single-heartedness, and of good-will, as it would not become me to dwell upon. Pope truly says—

> '"In faith and hope the world will disagree,
> But all mankind's concern is charity."

'I appeal to you on behalf of those who have been passed in the race and have fallen footsore by the wayside, but who are not less deserving than more fortunate followers of the beautiful art to which my best strength has been devoted, and in which my interest will be undying.'

The following letter, written by Mrs. Bancroft, and dated Thursday, July 23, 1885, happily exists to best describe a few more incidents, and will appropriately close the volume:

'We both deeply regretted that at the last moment you were prevented from being present at our *farewell!* Of course you have read the accounts, and the long leading articles in the newspapers; but no written description can give you an adequate idea of the whole scene from the rise of the curtain until its final fall, which

closed, for ever, our career as managers. Many weeks before the, to us, memorable night arrived, I felt as though a heavy weight were tugging at my heart. Those two relentless words "good-bye" haunted me, wherever I went, whatever I did. They were the last visions in my mind when going to sleep, and they rose up in big letters on my awaking. You will never know, and I can never explain to you, what a sad load it has been to carry in my thoughts. Was I not going to bid adieu to my dear public, my good faithful friends who helped me to launch the little ship with the three lucky plumes at its figure-head (have they not been lucky to me?), and who encourages me on and on until I had completed twenty long voyages. Some of our friends have reproached us for throwing down the reins so soon; but we feel that we have done all we can for our art (if we stayed too long it might be forgotten *how much* we have done). We have achieved all we desire for ourselves, and we don't wish to linger so long upon the scene as to outlive, perhaps, the liking of the public. We have been successful beyond our wildest hopes, but not without very hard work, and now we lay down our arms that they may be taken up by others who are "eager for the fray."

'The beautiful theatre presented a striking appearance. The royal box was occupied by the Prince and Princess of Wales and the three young princesses; the box on the opposite side by the Prince and Princess Christian, with whom were Mr. and Mrs. Jeune. The stalls were taken away, and in their stead were small chairs—making the house look as closely packed as a box of figs or sardines. It almost seemed as if everybody of distinction was squeezed into the building, and it was with a feeling of real pride that I looked upon the assembly which had come to do us so much honour. The great desire to be present was proof to us of high esteem and an acknowledgment of the good work we hope we have accomplished. It was, indeed, a moment to live for, to labour for. The theatre looked so gay and bright, like one huge bouquet set with brilliants. There was no feeling, I am sure, amongst that wonderful audience but of goodwill, and the hearts of all seemed to throb with one big beat, and that was for us.

'How I managed to dress for my part, I know not. I can only remember floral offerings of every conceivable design being brought to me, until there were so many that they had to be taken to a larger room. When I walked on to the stage in the second act of *Masks and Faces*, amongst Ernest Vane's other guests, my reception was so overpowering, and the "Good-bye" in my throat so big, that I nearly gave way. Someone (I think it was Mr. Barrymore) whispered to me, "Bear up," and that brought me to myself. You know how nervous and sensitive I am, but I gathered up all the strength at my command, and conquered the almost uncontrollable desire to cry. During the last act, when you know poor "Peg" is sorely tried, and has so many different emotions to por-

tray, it was with the greatest difficulty I managed to keep up until the end. But when the moment came to speak that beautiful "farewell" to Mabel Vane, every word seemed so appropriate, fitting in so strangely to the occasion, that I could fight against my emotions no longer ; the tears that had been waiting for the gates to open came freely to my eyes, and I fairly broke down. Mr. Irving delivered the "Good-bye" address with deep feeling ; and dear little Toole, in his own quaint fashion, spoke of us both with affection.

'After this came Mr. Bancroft's "Farewell." How he got through it as he did is a marvel to me, for he was painfully agitated. The stage was beautifully decorated with masses of flowers by several ladies, who kindly offered to do the duty, and a path was formed right down to the footlights, with a border of bouquets on each side, through which we both walked when we went on to make our final bow. The curtain was raised many times, and the sight of the upstanding audience cheering and waving their handkerchiefs was something to remember. The sound of their voices, the enthusiasm, the deafening applause, and "Auld Lang Syne" played by the band, was all so bewildering to my senses, that I felt dazed and as in a dream.

'When all this was over the Princess of Wales sent for me, and after gracious words of sympathy, presented me with the bouquet which she was carrying. You may imagine how deeply all this affected me. Many dear friends came round to speak pleasant words to me afterwards, and I was urged to go to a party given by Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, to which he had kindly invited us. I was advised that it would put my thoughts for a time into another groove, and would help me to a better night's rest than if I went immediately home after the tension and excitement I had gone through. We remained in the theatre some time before starting, but the crowd which had assembled in order to see us leave, completely blocking the whole of Suffolk Street, still waited, and as we passed through to the carriage, those who were near enough pressed forward to shake hands with us, while expressions of regret and good wishes were called out to us on every side. As the carriage went slowly through the crowd, hands were thrust in, and grasping mine, the people shouted, "It mustn't be good-bye !" "Don't go away !" "Stay with your friends !"

'At Mr. de Rothschild's beautiful house we again met the Prince of Wales, who talked with us for a long time in the most flattering way. We saw many people who had been at the theatre, Lord Granville being particularly kind in echoing remarks contained in a letter he wrote a few days ago. When at last we reached home, I threw on a dressing-gown, and had a long think and a good cry. After all the noise, excitement, and suppressed emotion, having been, as it were, "the observed of all observers," I sat alone in the silence of the night reflecting, looking back through that long vista

of the past, with its hard work, many triumphs, and bold achievements. I thought of my early struggles in childhood and girlhood —which made the water very rough for me to wade—but now that I am safely landed, I cannot help looking sadly back upon the stormy sea through which I had to pass. My sleep that night was fitful, as you may well believe, and in the morning when I tried to speak I found that my voice had left me: the vocal cord had collapsed, and the reaction was almost as bad as the nervous agitation which had caused it.

'I have received many charming letters, amongst them being one from Lady Salisbury, and another from Lady Iddesleigh—letters that I shall treasure very much; in the future I shall read them many a time, and picture in my memory that eventful night.

'Well, the bouquets were so numerous that they had to be sent home on the following day in a van, and when they arrived they could not all be accommodated inside the house, so they were placed in the balcony, which soon was filled. When the van arrived, a small crowd of people soon collected, and the remarks from some of them, which were afterwards repeated to me, were most amusing. "What's all this mean?" said one. "It's either a weddin' or a funeral," was the reply. "Who lives here?" "Oh! *I* know why: it's the Bancrofts' 'ouse; they've jist 'ad a heap of money left them by a relation wot insists on their leavin' the stage!" "Oh, then all this is for a party!" "It's more like a royal mausoleum!"

'The lovely flowers are fading fast, and yesterday I found that one of the huge offerings had been sent to me in a handsome silver bowl.

'I am now counting the hours to our start for my dear Engadine; there I shall find the rest which I need this time more than ever. I feel so tired, so sleepy, that when I get to Pontresina I shall lie down, look at my old friends the mountains, which divide me from the hurly-burly through which I have passed on the other side of them, and not wish to get up again for days. Good-bye—no, no! *au revoir* to you, dear. Think of me this time next week, when I would not change places with you, much as I like you.'

L'ENVOI.

We now put down the pen. Our work is done, and we have achieved the ambition of accomplishing the task ourselves. In the last words of Margaret Woffington, we say to our readers: 'Good-bye. When hereafter you hear harsh sentence passed on us—whose lot was admiration, rarely love; triumph, but seldom tranquillity—think sometimes of us and say, Stage *Masks* may cover honest *Faces*, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe.'

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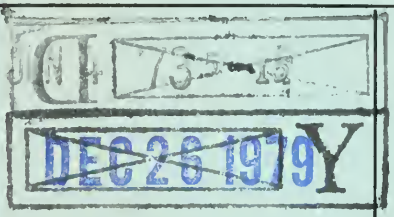

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